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124. l. 16. *for* Clark *read* Clarke.
213. l. 5. *for* re-solution *read* resolution.
237. l. 11. from the bottom, *for* came *read* same.

FRAGMENTS,

OR

MINUTES OF ESSAYS.

CONTINUED.

XXI.

I HAVE quoted from father Simon, in one of my Letters* to my Lord Cornbury, a divine of the faculty of Paris, who held, that the authenticity of these books, and divine inspiration of their authors, should be understood to extend no further than to matters purely of doctrine, or to such as have a necessary connection with these. Upon the same and even a stronger principle of reason, we may assert, that as the sacred writers have no claim to inspiration, when they write on other subjects; so neither have they when they write any thing on these, which is evidently inconsistent with right reason, in matters that are proper objects of reason, and with the first principles of natural law, which are, at the same time, the first principles of christianity. What the French

* Let. III.

divine advanced, and what I have advanced here, will be treated as an impious paradox by some of those trifling solemn dogmatists in criticism and theology, who have advanced so many absurd and impious, really impious, paradoxes of their own. But let us see, in the present case, on whose side the paradox and the impiety lie. I say, that the law of nature is the law of God. Of this I have the same demonstrative knowledge, that I have of the existence of God, the All-perfect Being. I say, that the All-perfect Being cannot contradict himself; that he would contradict himself if the laws contained in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, to mention no others here, were his laws, since they contradict those of nature, and therefore, that they are not his laws. Of all this I have as certain, as intuitive knowledge, as I have, that two and two are equal to four, or that the whole is bigger than a part. From these indisputable premises I conclude, that all those expressions in the text, which ascribe these laws to God, are uninspired, perhaps interpolated, but undoubtedly false. What now does the dogmatist do? He begs the question, and he pretends to demonstrate. His premises are precarious, and his conclusion is a paradox. He imputes, directly, to the Author of nature, what he is forced to own unjust and cruel, according to the laws of nature; and he pretends to justify the All-perfect Being, whom he has thus accused, by inconclusive and sophistical arguments.

I have touched this point above; but since I recollect

recollect that Mr. Locke has insisted on a solution of the difficulty, which, I think, and am not afraid to call inconclusive and sophistical, it is worth my while to bestow a few more words upon it. There is a respect due even to the mistakes of that great man, the respect I mean of giving a reason for not submitting to his authority, which I would not pay to every dull commentator, nor frothy declaimer, that should argue like him, or from him. We know, from some of his writings, how easily he received every hypothesis that favoured, or that seemed to favour, the authenticity of the Jewish Scriptures, notwithstanding all he said in his chapter of probability; and Mr. Coste, the translator of his famous Essay, who knew him well, accounted for this, and some other contradictions, by a strange timidity of temper, which made him often waver in his own abstract philosophical notions, when he came to apply them to any of his religious prejudices. He believed, on very insufficient authority, that the one true God was known to the Jews alone, and that the rest of mankind were polytheists and idolaters from the beginning. Thus he might receive too some other theological assumptions: this, for instance, as presumptuous and impertinent as it is, to assign the sufficient reason, that Infinite Wisdom had for doing in one manner what Infinite Power might have done in several, "that "it was necessary God should separate a chosen "people from the rest of mankind, in order to "preserve among mankind the knowledge of

" himself in his unity :" or this, that " the choice " fell on the Israelites not for their own merit," since no nation upon Earth could have less toward God or man, but, " for the merit of their " forefathers," of Abraham, famous in the east, the patriarch of the Arabians as well as of the Jews, of Isaac, his son, and of Jacob his grandson; of whom it is said, in the Scriptures, that they were preferred in the womb to Ismael and to Esau, without assigning any apparent reason for this preference, since they could have no personal merit so early; and the reason of which must have been, therefore, this, that the Israelites were to descend from them; which looks as if the fathers were chosen for the sake of the sons, rather than the sons for the sake of the fathers. Mr. Locke, who could embrace such hypotheses as these, might easily assume, as he did assume, that " in " order to keep up this separation, and to secure " the effects of it, the Supreme Being submitted to " be not only the tutelary deity of this people, " as he had been of their fathers, and to make " a covenant with them, but to be their local " deity, and even literally as much their king as " their God."

That he was such a king, Mr. Locke asserted, and on that assertion he distinguished between the Mosaical and all other laws, in his letter concerning toleration. By the former, idolaters were to be rooted out, he says; but the former is not obligatory on Christians, and therefore urged by intolerants very absurdly in favour of persecution.

The

The Jewish commonwealth, different from all others, was an absolute theocracy; no difference could be made between that commonwealth and the church; religious laws were the civil laws of that people, and part of their political government, in which God himself was the legislator. The citizens, therefore, of that commonwealth, who apostatised, were proceeded against as traitors and rebels, guilty of no less than high treason. Let it be so. The objections of injustice and cruelty to these laws will remain in their full force, and be of more weight to prove them human, than all these hypotheses to prove them divine. God was king, and idolatry was no less than high treason; no objection, therefore, can lie against the punishment of it. None certainly, but every objection to the manner and degree, in which this punishment was to be inflicted, stands good; for if we can believe God to have been a king, we can never believe him to have been such a king as he is described, nor to have given such laws as Moses gave in his name. It is not enough to deduce, in our notions, the Supreme Being to the state of an earthly monarch, unless we degrade the All-perfect Being, in them, to the character of an unjust and cruel tyrant, who authorised, and even commanded his ministers expressly to punish without measure, without discernment, and without forms of justice? Can it be obligatory on a Christian to believe this, which Mr. Locke believed? Surely not; no more than to believe, that it is obligatory on him at this day,

to punish hereticks by virtue of these laws, which opinion Mr. Locke disclaimed, and against which he wrote this very treatise.

I need not take notice of the indulgence, which Mr. Locke observes, to the honour of the Mosaical law, was shown by it to strangers. The observation is not strictly within my subject; for I never affirmed, that all the laws of Moses were repugnant to the law of nature. But what was this indulgence? Strangers were not compelled by force, and on pain of death, to embrace Judaism, nor were the Israelites commanded to exterminate the Moabites, and other foreign nations, unless they renounced their idolatry. The task might have been too hard for the chosen people, and they did not want, at that time, any more land than that of the seven nations. If they had wanted more, they would have soon had a law to take it, and to exterminate the rightful possessors; as they had a promise and a law, which authorised them to conquer and destroy the Canaanites. Mr. Locke, indeed, adds another reason for this destruction. God had chosen Canaan for his kingdom, as well as the Israelites for his subjects, and he could not suffer the adoration of any other deity in his kingdom, though, in fact, other deities continued to be adored there, with or without the consent of his people. More reflections on the manner of stating facts, as well as of arguing, may be made; but these are more than enough, to show in one instance more, and by the way, into how low a form the greatest writers fall, when they

they attempt to reconcile to common sense, or common honesty, many passages of traditions inconsistent with both. The Jews, or the penmen of these traditions, had so little of either, that they represent sometimes a patriarch like Jacob, and sometimes a saint like David, by characters that can belong to none but the very worst of men. Can we be surprised, then, that they ascribed to the All-perfect Being, on various occasions, such a conduct, and such laws as are inconsistent with his most obvious perfections? Can we believe such a conduct, and such laws, to have been his, on the word of the proudest and most lying nation of the world?

Many other considerations, some of which have been occasionally mentioned, in what I have writ to you, might have their place here. But I shall confine myself to one, which I do not remember to have seen, nor heard urged on one side, nor anticipated on the other. To show then, the more evidently, how absurd, as well as impious, it is to ascribe these Mosaical laws to God, let it be considered, that neither the people of Israel, nor their legislator, perhaps, knew any thing of another life, wherein the crimes committed in this life are to be punished; although he might have learned this doctrine, which was not so much a secret doctrine, as it may be presumed that the unity of the Supreme God was among the Egyptians. Whether he had learned both, or either, or neither of them in those schools, cannot be determined: but this may be advanced with as-

surance. If Moses knew, that crimes, and therefore idolatry, one of the greatest, were to be punished in another life, he deceived the people in the covenant they made by his intervention with God. If he did not know it, I say it with horrour, the consequence, according to the hypothesis I oppose, must be, that God deceived both him and them. In either case, a covenant or bargain was made, wherein the conditions of obedience and disobedience were not fully, nor by consequence fairly stated. The Israelites had better things to hope, and worse to fear, than those that were expressed in it; and their whole history seems to show how much need they had of these additional motives, to restrain them from polytheism and idolatry, and to answer the assumed purposes of Divine Providence.

XXII.

THE rough draughts, that have been thrown upon these papers, may help to show, that there is such a thing as the law of nature, antecedent to all other laws, and to the establishment of civil society; that this law is the law of reason, collected "à posteriori" from the actual constitution of things, by experience and observation; that as instinct, affections, passions, and self-love, that universal spring of the animal kind, were given to put us into action, so this law is given to guide and govern the human conduct; that if this

law

law did universally and constantly guide and govern it, mankind would reach the perfection of their nature, and be as happy as they are by this made capable of being; but that the culture of their reason, the improvement of their knowledge, and every thing that tends to the perfection of their nature, and the completion of their happiness, being left to their industry, and subjected to the accidents and vicissitudes of human affairs, some few remain in ignorance, many more fall into errour, and the irrational prevails over the rational nature, in different degrees, in all of them; that the state of mankind is imperfect, in proportion as the use, that they make of their reason is so; that the will of God, signified by the law of nature, and revealed in his works, a revelation that admits of no doubt, shows the road to human happiness to all mankind; that they are seduced out of it by false appearances, and that law, custom, and even religion, which should have kept them in it, confirm these appearances, and only serve to keep them out of it.

If it be difficult to show the particular reasons that have contributed, in an immense variety of instances, to render the laws and customs of mankind so opposite to one another as they are, and so opposite, or so little conformable, to the law of nature and of right reason, which should have been the model, and must be made the criterion of them all, it is easy enough to discover what has rendered the religions, that have arisen in the world, from

from the first ages of it, so opposite in many particular modes, so similar in many general principles, and all of them together so little conformable to natural religion.

These religions, instituted by human, under the mask of divine authority, though they might be intended to restrain and reform mankind, to give stronger sanctions to the law of nature, and to be subservient to government, have served, in all ages, to very different purposes. They have promoted false conceptions of the deity; they have substituted superstition in the place of those real duties, which we owe to God and man; they have added new occasions to those that subsisted before of enmity and strife; and insociability has increased as they have flourished. Nay, the first principles of them have been laid in it, in direct opposition to the religion of nature and reason, the first principle of which is a sociability, that flows from universal benevolence. We are obliged to except, out of the religions instituted by human authority, the Jewish and the Christian; but we cannot except even these, as one of them was taught originally, as the other of them has been taught in the course of it, and as both of them have been practised, out of the religions that have served to the ill purposes here mentioned, to that principally of insociability. On the contrary, no religions have rendered the professors of them so insociable to other men, as those which have claimed truly or falsely to be immediate revelations of the Supreme Being, and have exacted an implicit faith

as

as well as an implicit obedience. Insociability was from the first, and continues still, the great characteristick of Judaism. So it was, and so it is of Mahometanism. So it was not of Gospel Christianity, but so it is become of theological christianity; if I may be allowed to make a distinction, which will justify itself abundantly in every instance of comparison.

The wisdom as well as the power, that appears in the whole construction, order, and harmony of the universe, must have carried at all times the same general conviction into the breast of every man who observed, and reflected on his own observations. Balbus had, therefore, sufficient reason to say, in a good sense, what Tully makes him say, that "he must want intelligence "himself who can believe, that this stupendous "machine was made and is preserved without "intelligence," that is without distinct and superior intelligence, not without intelligence of it's own; the intelligence of the maker, not that of the thing made; for this is such an absurdity as the refinements of philosophy alone could adopt, and as can be never reconciled to the judgment of common sense. "Celestem ergo admirabilem "ordinem . . . . qui vacare mente putat, is ipse "mentis expers habendus est," may be understood indeed to signify this very absurdity in the mouth of a stoick, and Tully might mean to make Balbus speak in character, for which reason the passage should never be quoted without any explanation, as it is continually, for an exposition of true

true theism. But if the sphere of Posidonius had been sent to the Britons, or to the Scythians, in the days of Balbus and Tully; if the machine called, I know not why, the Orrery, was sent, in our days, to the Hottentots, or the Samojedes; these savages would smile at the stupidity of any of their brethren, if any so stupid should be found among savages, who could imagine such a machine to be the effect of chance, or to have contrived and made itself. They would all conclude, that it was the work of intelligence, and of greater skill than that which they employed to build their huts, or to shape their canoes. The most reasonable among them could not fail to see, in the unity of the design, the unity of the artificer. But the vulgar, who make themselves, their own ideas, and their own manners, the measure of all things, might very easily conclude, that the several parts of this machine were made, and the several motions of it were directed, by different intelligencies. This opinion too might grow up to be general among them, and the most rational savages might be obliged to yield to the least rational, in advancing of which no more is assumed than what has happened in every age and country, even the most civilised, and the least ignorant. But none of these savages would be absurd enough to suppose, though philosophers such as the stoicians have done little less, that the intelligence which made every wheel of the machine to move was in the wheel.

The Romans, the Greeks, and before them, all the

the learned nations of the East, were in this case. The vulgar acknowledged a multitude of divinities, to whom they ascribed every excellency, and every defect of their own nature, so that in worshipping them they worshipped in some sort themselves. Their wise men, who acknowledged the unity of a Supreme Being, and held these inferior divinities to be his creatures and ministers, made even this being after their own image. The lovers of ease made him an indolent being, and wholly unconcerned about human affairs. The proud, who thought every thing that related to man equally important, and equally an object worthy of the divine care, made him a busy trifling being. "Myrmecides aliquis, minutorum opusculorum "fabricator." They who converted, with profane timidity, a reverential awe into a superstitious fear of God, and made the existence of a Supreme Being, which ought to be the comfort, the terrour of mankind, ran into one of these extremes. They either screened him from human sight by the interposition of mediating, interceding, atoning beings: or, fierce and cruel themselves, they represented him hating without reason, revenging without provocation, and punishing without measure. The gay, the wanton, the luxurious, made gods and goddesses of the same characters; and Jupiter himself, the father of gods and men, was liable to human passions, and partook of sensual pleasures. Thus the vulgar believed, and thus the priests encouraged; while the philosophers, overborne by the torrent of polytheism, suffered them

them to believe, in ages when true theism was reputed atheism. There were others again who had, beside that vanity which is common to all men, the particular vanity of believing themselves chosen objects of the care of Heaven, distinguished by singular privileges, and predestinated to some glorious purpose or other. The Egyptians were the first of all men admitted to the sight of the gods, and to a communication with them, according to Jamblicus, and we may see what notions had been instilled into the Romans, of grandeur and empire, to which they were designed by the gods. when we read the pompous answer that Jupiter makes to his daughter, in the first book of the Æneid. I wave any further instances of the same kind: that of the Israelites, the most extraordinary of any, is too well known to be mentioned.

It is unnecessary too that I should enumerate, in this place, any of those metaphysical whimsies, concerning the divine and human nature, which philosophers broached, and brought into fashion; as the vulgar had brought, though they had not been alone to invent, all the false conceptions that prevailed about the Deity. Much has been said already, and more will be said on that subject. What is to my purpose to observe here is, that the systems of theology, which philosophers, priests, and the rabble of the world, conspired to frame, were systems of superstition; that they passed, however, for systems of religion revealed some how or other, to somebody or other, sometimes

sometimes by the Supreme Being himself, sometimes by any other divine person, and, therefore, always of more authority than such as human reason could collect from the appearances of things. This persuasion too made it quite unnecessary to employ human reason about so superfluous a work, and thus an immense crop of superstitions grew up, choaked the seeds of natural religion, and corrupted, in a great degree, both publick and private morality.. In short, reason has been always controlled, natural religion and natural law have been almost entirely superseded in every society of men, and many instances might be produced to show, that this has happened most in those which have been esteemed the most civilised. This has been the effect of imagination and passion, necessary, but dangerous, parts of our composition, under the influence of particular prejudices, and the direction of private motives in matters of the most publick concern. If the revelations had not been pretended only, if the same Divine Wisdom, that shows both the existence and the will of God in his works, had prescribed any particular form of worship to mankind, and had inspired the particular applications of his general laws, the system of religious and civil government would have been uniform in the whole world, as well as conformable to nature and reason, and the state of mankind would have arrived at human perfection. But it was not in the councils of the Most High, which it becomes us to adore, and not to examine, that this should be

so,

so, and therefore, all these systems of religions and laws, being nothing more than human expedients, there is no room to wonder, that they have not been more effectual to good purposes, nor that the state of mankind is such as we feel, and as we are apt to complain that it is.

XXIII.

We may assure, from fact, that this has been the divine œconomy, and leave those men to assume from imagination what this œconomy has or should have been, who have so much theological presumption. But while we leave them to imagine without fact, we must not suffer them to imagine against it. Nothing can be, I think, more true than what has been advanced concerning the unnatural religions, laws, and customs established in the several societies of men, and yet it is not less true, that the tables of natural religion and law are hung up in the sight of all men. All may read them, and though errour has prevailed, and will ever prevail in the bulk of mankind against knowledge, more or less, and to some degree, because it is agreeable to the private interests of those who lead, and to the prejudices of those who are led, that it should, I do not believe that there ever was a time, when it could be said with truth, that the law of nature was imperfectly known, or that it was an incomplete system of morality before the Christian revelation;

lation, both of which propositions are roundly advanced by divines, though manifestly false.

But Clarke says, in his Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, which are often dim, and often weak, that the heathen philosophers were never able to prove and explain clearly and distinctly enough, to persons of all capacities, those things which they were the most fully certain of, and did in good measure understand, such as the obligations of virtue, and the will of God, in matters of morality. Now if it could be reconciled to common sense, that they understood not fully, but in good measure only, such doctrines as they are said in the same sentence to have been fully certain of, there would be no occasion to wonder, that they were unable to prove and explain them. But to pass this over, the reasons alleged to show their inability in this respect, or that they understood these things in good measure only, are such as give, indeed, great occasion to wonder, when they fall from the pen of so able a writer. Their discourses, he says, were rather speculative and learned, nice and subtile disputes, than practical and useful instructions; the bulk of mankind could not profit by the sublime doctrine of Plato, for instance. Agreed. The difficulty then of discovering, and explaining the will of God, in matters of morality, and the whole system of natural religion arose merely from the method they took of discovering it to themselves, and of explaining it to others. That is, they did by this system the very thing which divines have done by that of christianity.

Philosophers departed from the simplicity of nature, divines from that of the Gospel. Had the former been content to collect the will of God, as far as it concerns the duty of man, from what they knew of themselves, of their fellow-creatures, and of the constitution, physical and moral, of the world, they had neither bewildered themselves, nor grown unintelligible to others. But they could not be so content. Many of these ancient, like their mimicks, the modern reasoners, "à priori," undertook to deduce the religion of human nature and of human reason, from principles that exist infinitely beyond them. They knew human nature, and from thence they might, by the help of human reason, have taught very clearly what they understood very fully. They did both when they kept within these bounds, but when they went beyond them, they did neither. When they pretended to contemplate the nature and moral attributes of the Supreme Being, they were, indeed, as unqualified for it, as bats are to behold the light of the sun. They puzzled the clearest, and confounded the most distinct ideas, sometimes by metaphysical enthusiasm, and sometimes by political design; for when such mists are conjured up in the most serene parts of our intellectual system, it cannot be intended by men who are in their senses, one would think, to make us see better; and, therefore, I could never read the proposition, that we may easily know God, if we be not ignorant of ourselves, so absolutely advanced; nor that strange parallel between God and the soul of man,

wherein

wherein Dr. Barrow confesses that he indulged his thoughts somewhat freely*, without being sorry to find them in the works of so respectable an author.

Another reason, brought by Clarke, to show how unable these philosophers were to prove and explain the obligations of natural religion, is this. They were never able to frame to themselves any complete, and regular, and consistent system or scheme of things. If by these words be meaned, as it must be in this place, such a system or scheme of morality, the fact asserted is untrue, how excellent soever the eloquent Lactantius may have set this matter forth, or the judicious Justin may have supported our modern doctor. In contradiction to all three, we may affirm boldly, because truly, that there is no one moral virtue, which has not been taught, explained, and proved, by the heathen philosophers, both occasionally and purposely. It is, therefore, particularly absurd, in Christian writers, to say, as the author of the Evidences says, after his two guides, that these philosophers did, indeed, discover all the particular doctrines of true religion, but that no one of them made a scheme true in all it's parts, nor did any one collect the several truths scattered up and down in their writings. For, I ask, are all the truths of natural and revealed religion collected into one regular and complete system in any of the Gospels, or even of the Epistles? did any one

* Vol. II, Serm. vii.

of the fathers of the church make an entire scheme of religion or morality, true in all it's parts? will any man have the front to deny, that they all mingled some truth and some errour? did not this very Lactantius, did not Justin do so? did any one of the fathers collect the truths that concern all our moral obligations, separate them from the errours, and make a regular complete system of the whole? will it be said that St. Ambrose did? but St. Ambrose was a poor imitator of Tully. In short, all the heathen philosophers agreed, that the practice of virtue was of necessary and indispensable obligation, and that the happiness of mankind depended on it in general and particular. They all agreed likewise what was virtue, and what was vice; and if they had any disputes about the great principles of natural, Christians had the same about the great principles of revealed religion. They had such in the days of Justin and of Lactantius, and that they continued to have them in our days, Clarke himself has been a signal example.

It was neither natural theology, nor ethicks, that perplexed natural religion. It was metaphysical theology. Ancient, like modern, heathen, like christian philosophers, had indeed many trifling disputes about words, the Stoicks particularly, or about things so very plain, that nothing less than Grecian acuteness could make them appear at all intricate. Such were those about the "summum bonum*," in which it is said, there

* Varro, St. Austin.

were

were two hundred and fourscore different opinions. That there were so many may be doubted, but that they must have been extremely various is certain. The "summum bonum," or the supreme good of man, as it was understood and taught by the heathen philosophers, and which Dr. Clarke calls, not without a designed ambiguity, the final happiness of man, was a subject whereon every man had a right to pronounce for himself, and no man had a right to pronounce for another. These disputes were, therefore, very trifling. But they should not be so strongly objected, since it is easy to show, that Christian divines, the schoolmen especially, have trifled as much on points relative to natural and revealed religion both, as ever the heathen did on points relative to the former. Of the christian trifles too, we may say, what could not be said of the others, that they became serious: "hæ nugæ ad seria ducunt." They have divided the schools, and the schools have divided the world, with circumstances of rage and cruelty to be found among no other parties.

XXIV.

If such disputes, as that which has been mentioned, were easy, or might be thought unnecessary to be determined, disputes of another kind arose, when the heathen philosophers attempted, for they did attempt, to make a complete, regular, and consistent system or scheme of things, the want of which is objected to them. These at-

tempts were pushed very far by pagan theists, but it must be confessed, that they served only to show, that men are fitted to know a little of some few things, and the whole of nothing. These men found soon, that no sufficient materials for such a system or scheme lay within the bounds of natural law, and natural theology. They had recourse, therefore, to metaphysical theology, which being a science of their own invention, it was easy for them to establish such principles in it, as they judged sufficient for their purpose. They proceeded, therefore, to reverse the whole order of reasoning in the search of truth; to reverse the pyramid; and instead of rising up from a broad foundation of particulars, laid in knowledge, to the lofty and narrow pinnacle of all knowledge, the existence of one all-perfect Being, they affected preposterously to set this pinnacle on the ground, and to raise the pyramid without any foundations at all. They not only reasoned concerning the nature and attributes of God himself, from mere imagination, but they gave him as many companions, and ministers, gods, angels, dæmons, genii, as they thought fit. Clarke says, and most of his brethren agree with him, that to reason in this manner from the nature and attributes of God is the very first and most necessary thing of all. His and their approbation of the reasoning of pagan theists, in consequence of this first and most necessary thing of all, would not be quite so full; and indeed it may seem to have been introduced for ornament, rather than

for

for use, by those who made the one Supreme Being, according to the nature and attributes they give him, so immediately active in human affairs. But the pagan theists declined no help; and the service their gods and other inferior beings were of, in accounting for the creation and government of the world, is known to every man who has been conversant in their writings, in those of Plato particularly. When they wanted to account for the origin of evil, ditheism was invented; when they wanted to account for the supposed unjust distribution of good and evil, the "mythologia de "inferis."

But to be more particular. Clarke observes, that bare reason cannot discover in what manner, and with what kind of external service God will be worshipped. He might have added, that bare reason cannot discover how any external service, that man can pay, should be acceptable to the Supreme and all-perfect Being, except a compliance in all our words and actions with his known will, revealed in his works, an inward adoration of his unknown nature, a gratitude for benefits, and an entire resignation to his Providence. The heathens knew, that all the duties of natural religion are contained under these heads, but that the divine will concerning any external service, with which God would be worshipped, had been signified relatively to none of these duties. They might, therefore, as the best and wisest of them did, approve the political institutions of an external service, as political institu-

tions, and as far as they helped to keep up a lively sense of these duties in the minds of men, and to promote the practice of them. But they, who presumed to reason boldly, about the nature and attributes of God, were not so content. They represented the one Supreme Being, to themselves and others, under as many different characters as they represented their different gods. The most general representation of him, because it was thought the most proper to intimidate mankind, and to answer the ends of government, or because it was that which natural and superstitious fear could the most easily frame, was framed under the image of an absolute tyrannical monarch. From such notions, these reasoners " à priori" deduced all those, whereby they took men out of the relation of creatures to their creator, and placed them in that of slaves to their tyrant. From hence those numberless, ridiculous, and cruel rites of paganism, which were held as necessary to obtain the favour, and to avert the anger of Heaven, as the strictest observation of morality; nay, more necessary, if we may judge, as we may most reasonably, of ancient by modern, and of pagan by christian theology.

Obedience to the law of nature is our first duty, and our greatest interest: the happiness of our whole kind, wherein every individual is included, depends on it. Obedience carries it's reward, disobedience it's punishment along with it, in the general system, and God has not made particular systems, nor established particular providences for

for particular nations, much less for particular men, as far as we can discover by the help of reason and experience. The same causes produce the same effects every where, with some little variety of circumstances; and as the precepts of the law are common to all men, so are the sanctions of it. In short, as all men sin against the order of nature more or less, so the imperfect state of mankind shows, that they suffer more or less by the uniform course of it. But neither reason nor experience will show us, in the Author of nature, an angry revengeful judge, or a bloody executioner. Neither reason nor experience will lead us to inquire what propitiation God will accept, nor in what manner a reconciliation between the Supreme Being and this worm man is to be made *. Natural reason does not stop here, nor expect with impatience the aid of some particular revelation. She stops much sooner. Repentance, as it implies amendment, is one of her doctrines, a necessary consequence of her principles, and she does not so much as suspect that any further revelation is wanting to establish it. But the reasoners "à "priori" did, on false principles, in this case, and in many others, what an unreasoning vulgar had done through ignorance, and without any principles at all, except those of superstition. They took off from the real perfections of the Supreme Being, and they added imaginary excellencies to

* Clarke, in his Evid.

the

the human nature: like Procrustes, they stretched out humanity, and lopped off from divinity, with great metaphysical pains, as much as they could; and when they found, that one of these lines was still too short, and the other still too long, to answer their purpose, of making them nearly commensurate, they spun a thread out of imagination, to lengthen the shortest.

On such notions of the divine and human nature, Egyptian, Chaldæan, Magian, and almost all the theists of antiquity, founded their theology, on the authority of which they instituted various forms of worship, and promoted superstitious opinions, by their attempts to discover the whole scheme and system of things, some of which infected even the fathers of our church in ancient times, and would be avowed at this time by none but rosicrucians, and fanaticks as mad as them. In fine, this was the source from which so many religious ceremonies and observances, that had no direction to promote natural religion, though pretending to derive their institution from the Author of it, arose. Sins were multiplied, and the terrours of superstitious minds increased. But even if these terrours had been rightly and solely applied to real crimes, not of sins of arbitrary discipline, they would have been of little effect, since the means of reconciling all sinners to an offended deity were made by this theology extremely easy. Strange means indeed, they were, and such as cost the offender little. Such were expiatory sacrifices, wherein the blood of an innocent

innocent beast, or man, was shed to atone for the guilty person, as if God was appeased whenever the priests were glutted with roast meat, or as if it were indifferent to him whose blood was shed, provided his altars reeked with gore. This expiation was pushed to such a degree of pious inhumanity, that fathers made burnt offerings of their children to Moloch. I call it pious, because they, who never offered up themselves, seemed however to prove their repentance, as Abraham was ready to prove his faith, much better, by sacrificing their children, than a ram or an ox. They sacrificed what they held dearest next to themselves; and they might think, that they had the example of the Gods, to authorise the practice; for Sanchoniathon, it is said, related, that Saturn had offered up his only son in the time of a plague. "Cœlo patri in holocaustum obtulit."

This was one effect of theological engraftments on natural religion. The Supreme Being was represented so vindicative and cruel, that nothing less than acts of the utmost cruelty could appease his anger, and that his priests were so many butchers of men and other animals. Another engraftment of the same kind was deduced from a very contrary notion, from a notion that God was constantly attentive to the affairs of men, to the least, and to the most important alike; that he entered into the closest familiarity with some, and gave audience at all times to all. Astonishing instances of this sort, as well

well as of the former, might be cited; for the same theology, which represented the all-perfect Being rigorous and severe, without any regard to his mercy, or even to his justice, represented him, with most theological inconsistency, on other occasions, gracious, conversable, affable, without any regard to his majesty, or to the infinite superiority of his nature. But these instances are so easily found, and they are so shocking to every sincere theist, who frames the most elevated, and therefore the least unworthy sentiments he is able of God, that I am willing to save myself and you the trouble of reflecting on them. "Ita tetra sunt, ut ea fugiat & reformi-" det oratio*." How should they be otherwise, when ignorance and superstition were first to produce them, and when the eternal unalterable reason of things, the knowledge of which is claimed by men, who approve some of the most detestable of these instances, and who produce others of their own growth, and upon the same principles, is for the most part nothing else than the reason of party, of prejudice, of profession, and of authority? Let me, therefore, mention one alone. It shall be one that is common to all religions, and that carries with it, in general practice, more matter of ridicule than of horrour. The instance, I mean, is prayer; or to speak more properly, the abuse of prayer. To keep up a due sense of our dependance on God, for

* Cic. Tusc. Disp.

which

which purpose this institution may be a very useful, and consequently a very rational expedient, is the duty of every man. But then it must be practised in a manner reconcilable to other duties of religion; in the first place, to an awful reverence, which consists in the inward sentiment wholly, and so little in outward demonstrations, that when these are carried too far, they become a ludicrous pageantry of devotion, and serve rather to destroy it in most minds than to maintain it in any; to an absolute resignation in the next place, one act of which is preferable to ten thousand collects. Men are fond of access to the Supreme Being. Nothing can flatter humanity so much. As soon, therefore, as they are taught that they may have it, not only by their proxies, the priests, but by themselves immediately, they use it familiarly and impertinently. They put up contradictory petitions to Heaven in all the churches in the world. Some would be hurtful to themselves if they were granted, and almost all would be so to others. If the true God could be importuned, as Lucian represents Jupiter, he would be importuned to change at every moment the dispositions of his Infinite Wisdom, and to accommodate the whole œconomy of his Providence in a manner that implies often contradiction, to different and opposite interests, nay to the different and opposite caprices, not of nations alone, but of particular men, women, and children.

Since I have mentioned this part of divine worship, among other external services, it may be

be proper to take notice of the second Alcibiades, which Mr. Clarke quotes, and which will serve, if I mistake not, my purpose better than his. In that dialogue, Socrates insists on the danger of addressing particular petitions to the Gods, lest we should ask what is evil in itself, or what may prove so in the event. He recites the prayer of some ancient poet, which is little else than a short act of resignation. He commends the Lacedæmonians for addressing themselves in much the same style to the Gods, when they asked in general "pulchra cum bonis." He mentions the preference given by the oracle of Jupiter Hammon to the prayers of the Lacedæmonians over those of the Athenians, and the rest of the Greeks. The authority of Homer is brought, as Plato, Plutarch, and generally the ancient writers are apt to allege it on all occasions very impertinently, to prove, that the Gods are prone to be angry, and to bear hatred even to whole nations. But Socrates concludes very rationally, that if they are so they are not to be bribed by sacrifices, by offerings, and by external services, and that they regard the purity of the heart alone. Socrates thought, that human errours about the will of God, and the duty of man, proceeded from pride more than ignorance, and therefore advised Alcibiades, of the purity of whose heart he had no very good opinion, "since he would not make "use of the general resigned prayer of the La-"cedæmonians, because of his pride, to wait "till he had learned how to behave himself to-

"ward

" ward the gods and toward men." He adds, " that one who had a concern for him, and a " wonderful care of him, would be his instruc- " tor, and would dispel the darkness of his mind, " as Minerva in Homer takes the cloud from " before the eyes of Diomede, that he might be " able to discern what was good from what was " evil."

Whether it be as difficult, as Clarke imagined, to suppose that Socrates meaned himself, in this passage, I examine not. Let it be, that he meaned the dæmon of Alcibiades. Since the master had an attending dæmon, who dissuaded and restrained him when that was necessary; the scholar might have one who would inform and determine him, whenever that should be necessary. Nay more. Let it be as some learned men * have observed, that Plato began to write immediately after the three last prophets of the Jews, as if God had raised up him to supply their place. Let them cite in favour of this opinion another passage, wherein this philosopher says, " that if a per- " fectly just man should appear in the world, he " would be imprisoned, buffetted, whipped, and " crucified, which must needs have been a pro- " phecy of Christ, because Christ was whipped " and crucified; whereas Socrates only drank the " poison by which he was condemned to die". Let the same learned men take this passage too, in the second Alcibiades, if they please, for ano-

* Dacier.

ther

ther prophecy of the coming of Christ, and of a divine revelation, since remote events, and a distant time, are often signified by immediate events, and the present time, in prophetical language.

Such prophecies in Plato will not be readily nor generally admitted, I think; neither does Clarke insist that they should. But it must be admitted, that Plato insinuates in many places the want, or the necessity, of a divine revelation, to discover the external service God requires, and the expiation for sin, to give stronger assurances of the rewards and punishments that await men in another world, concerning which, however, he had received particular information, by one who returned from thence on purpose, and to frame a system of the whole order of things, both in this world and the next, that is, of the whole œconomy of God's dispensations to man, and of his government in Heaven and on Earth.

XXV.

It was on some of these subjects Socrates had discoursed, when Simmias spoke to him in the manner quoted by Clarke. He had owned that he did not expect to attain a full knowledge of these things, till the soul was separated from the body, and entirely purified in that other world, of which he gave so topographical a description. The conclusion was, "that, since they could not "acquire

" acquire a certain knowledge of the truth here, " they should fix on the best and safest of hu- " man reasons, and venture on that bottom " through the storms of life, unless they could " get one still more firm, such as some divine " revelation would be, to render their passage " less dangerous." This now is the second of the proofs brought to show, "that the best, " wisest, and least superstitious of the philoso- " phers confessed their sense of the want of a " divine revelation, and hoped for something of " that nature." The proofs are pompously introduced, but the whole force of them amounts to no more than this, that Socrates, if in truth Socrates did say all that his scholar makes him say, was much in the wrong for not adding curiosity to pride, among the causes of human errour, concerning the will of God, and the duty of man; but Socrates himself had a great mind to know more than God has made his human creatures capable of knowing, and, therefore, more than he judged it necessary or useful for them to know. The imaginary want had, therefore, no other principle than metaphysical curiosity. It could have no other. Nothing could be wanting to the divine purpose where God had given, though he limited the means. How absurd, how trifling is it then to bring the opinion of philosophers concerning this want, and their hopes that it would be supplied, as a proof that the want was real, and that, after it had been long complained of, it was supplied? I pass over another pretended

proof of the same kind. Porphyry, whom it is impossible to see ranked among the least superstitious philosophers without surprise, found, it seems, that the universal method of delivering souls was not sufficiently known by philosophers.

In general, these men complained that sense reached but a little way in acquiring knowledge, that the human mind was weak, that the human life was short, and that the truth of things lay deep in darkness*. These complaints related to all parts of science, physical and metaphysical, to natural philosophy as well as natural theology, and I might, therefore, make the same use of them in one case, that Clarke makes in the other. I might bring the imperfect knowledge of corporeal nature, and the sense philosophers had of this imperfection, in proof that some necessary knowledge of this kind was wanting, and that they had reason to hope the defect would be supplied sooner or later, some how or other, in a natural or in a supernatural way. I might beg the question, like the doctor, and having assumed, that they were ignorant of many things necessary to the physical, as he assumes with much less reason, that they were of many things necessary to the moral advantages of life; I might argue, that they had reason to expect a time would come, when men would be rendered able to discover not only the second, but the first qualities of substances, to

* Angustos sensus, imbecillos animos, brevia curricula vitæ, in profundo veritatem esse demersam, omnia tenebris circumfusa esse. . . . .

reason

reason from a general knowledge of essences, not from a particular knowledge of effects, and to frame by these and other extraordinary means a complete, regular, and consistent scheme or system of the whole œconomy of corporeal nature.

In this manner I might represent the wants, the complaints, and the expectations of the heathen philosophers. Thus I might argue, and my representation and my argument would be extremely ridiculous. But are those of Clarke less so? I think not. These philosophers, such of them, at least, whose works are come down to us, were very ignorant in physicks. But in natural theology, and in morality, their knowledge was not deficient, though it was confined in the former to a very few general propositions. They had the same natural means of knowing that we have; and they knew, as well as we know, that "there "is a first intelligent Cause of all things, that the "Infinite Wisdom and power of this Being made "and preserves the universe, and that his Pro- "vidence governs it." They knew then, very fully, the relation in which they stood to this Being, the relation of dependent creatures and subjects; and this knowledge was sufficient, or none would be so, to enforce the laws he had given them; for the same means, that discovered the divine existence, discovered the divine will in the whole extent of our moral obligations. We might have expected, that Clarke would have specified some of these moral obligations, which were unknown, or imperfectly known, to the philoso-

phers, after all his insinuations concerning their ignorance. But instead of doing this, he insists, in the very place where his subject required it, on such observances, such doctrines, and such speculations alone as have been since indeed imposed by the christian revelation, but as cannot be reckoned necessary parts, nor in truth, any parts of the religion of nature and of reason. Lactantius, whom he quotes so often, and whose suffrage is in this case of more weight, because his zeal for christianity was such, that he defended and taught it before he understood it, gives up the point. The philosophers, according to him, discovered the whole truth, and the whole secret of divine religion*. No doubt they did so, and the natural divine religion, which they discovered, is the foundation of the christian. There is no one moral precept in the whole Gospel, as I have hinted already, which was not taught by heathen philosophers. Even those refinements upon virtue, to which our divines are willing to suppose, that mere humanity could not reach, were taught by some heathen sages, and practised by some heathen saints, as well before as after the coming of Christ. Before this time, their religion, that I mean of some of the philosophers, was much more spiritual than that of the Jews. After this time, it vied for spirituality, for mystery, and for supernatural effects, with the Christian. To be humble, to renounce the pomps and vanities of

* Totam igitur veritatem, et omne divinæ religionis arcanum philosophi attigerunt. L. 7.

the

the world, to mortify the flesh, to be patient under afflictions, to forgive injuries, to return good for evil, were particular doctrines of paganism, as universal charity or benevolence was the broad foundation of their moral system. This matter is strongly and largely exemplified in the third book of the "Alnetanæ Quæstiones;" for it served Bishop Huet's argument in that place to show, what it served Dr. Clarke's argument in his Evidences to conceal.

How trifling is it, after this, to insist on the disputes of a theological kind; for of a moral kind there were, properly speaking, none that arose among the philosophers? They were disputes about words, or about some very insignificant speculations, and no more; for the morality of Zeno, and of Epicurus, reduced to practice, was the same. But to proceed; how strongly might this objection be retorted on the fathers of the christian church! To object, that the heathen had no one complete scheme wherein all the moral duties were collected together, instead of being taught occasionally, is ridiculous, since the same objection might be made, if it was one, to christianity likewise. But the divines, who object this, mean something more. When they say, that the philosophers were unable to comprehend the truth of religion, though they discovered and explained almost all the particulars wherein it consists *, they mean by the entire

* . . . Quamvis ea fere, quibus summa ipsa constat, et viderint, et explicaverint. Lact. L. 7.

scheme they refer to, the summary of their own theology, wherein the fall and the redemption of man, and all the mysteries of christianity are contained. This they call the whole doctrine and design of true religion, from the original to the consummation of all things, and of this indeed the heathen philosophers might well be ignorant, since no man could know it, who was not taught by St. Paul, or by some christian doctor*.

Thus their ignorance of true religion is accounted for not a little hypothetically. But even thus their complaints are not justified, nor the expectations imputed to them rendered reasonable. They must needs be ignorant of true religion, if natural was a part of it only, even at that time, as it is at this. They could not know a revealed religion, nor any real want of it, before the revelation was made; and the knowledge they had was such as the Author of nature had thought sufficient, since he had given them no more. Their complaints and their expectations, therefore, were founded in proud curiosity, and vain presumption. The use which Clarke makes of them is something worse. To approve them, and to deduce from the supposed reasonableness of them the necessity of a further revelation, is to weigh his own opinion, and theirs, against Providence. It is to say, that they saw before, and that he has seen since this further revelation was made, the

* Verum autem non nisi ejus scire est, qui sit doctus a Deo. Ib.

necessity

necessity of it to reform mankind effectually, by opening to them the whole doctrine and design of true religion, which were opened in part only to the heathen world; and that the event has justified the complaints, and the expectation. This latter has been a topick of much theological triumph. Bring me a man, says Lactantius *, who is cholerick, who is given to rail, who is unruly and fierce, with a few words of God I will render him as tame as a sheep. Bring me one who is given up to his lust, and so he goes on. "Numquis "hæc philosophorum aut unquam præstitit, aut "præstare si velit, potest?" Did any one of the philosophers do so much, or could he, if he would? "It was hard," says St. Austin, where he mentions the letter of Porphyry to Anebo, "it was "hard for so great a philosopher to discover, to "expose, and boldly to convict the whole diabo-"lical society, which every little old christian "woman discovers at once, and detests openly. "Quam qælibet anicula christiana nec nosse "cunctatur, et liberrimè detestatur." Thus the triumph of the Gospel over ignorance and immorality, and the reformation of the world, by the publication of it, are frequently magnified. But when we consider the means of reforming mankind, which the heathen philosophers and the christian divines have had in their turns, and compare the progress made in this great work by both, it will appear, that the former had

* Vid. the quotation in the Evid.

not sufficient means, (so far their complaints were well founded) nor the latter a success proportionable to the means they had. In short, if Clarke's way of reasoning be good, some extraordinary and supernatural assistance to reform the world is still wanting; for it would be impious to say, that a further revelation is just as necessary now as it was before the coming of Christ,

XXVI.

To speak of the want of sufficient means to propagate natural religion, distinctly from the want of a sufficient knowledge of it, which are often purposely confounded together, that the first, which is true, may cover the last, which is false, must be our next task.

There was no creed, nor any act of uniformity imposed on the heathen philosophers. But still it is not true, that the system of moral obligations, or natural religion, was to them a wide sea, wherein they wandered without knowing their way, or having any guide. It is not true, that they were unable to make out upon what principles originally, and for what end ultimately, the choice of virtue was to be made*. They had better guides than Clarke, whom it was in their power to follow, nature and reason; one pointed out their way with a steady hand, and the other was sufficient to

* Vid. Evid. p. 176, 191.

lead

lead them in it; the very purpose for which it was given. The original principles of this choice were strongly laid in the constitution of things, and these philosophers must have been stupid, as well as blind, if they had not felt, as well as seen, that the ultimate end of this choice was the happiness of mankind. They felt it, they saw it, they proved it to others. Virtue was not only recommended as wise, and reasonable, and fit to be chosen, but surely it was established by them to be of plain necessity, and indispensable obligation; since it was taught to be the perfection of our nature, as well as the positive will of God, and since the greatest part of them did their utmost to establish a belief of rewards and punishments in a future life, that they might allure to virtue, and deter from vice, the more effectually. But the generality of mankind continued in their evil habits, notwithstanding all these doctrines, and all the institutions contrived to inforce them. What promised to be effectual in speculation, proved ineffectual in practice. Vice was checked, but virtue did not prevail. The conquest was never complete.

Shall we say, that the reason of this was because the missionaries of natural religion, who set themselves in earnest about this excellent work, were few*? But this reason will not hold, for how few soever they might be in general, they

* Evid. p. 173.

were

they made in reforming the world. But he should have been restrained from insisting on this argument, both by the reason of the thing, and by a regard to the order of which he was. If the vices of many, among those who were missionaries of morality in the heathen world, disappointed the common endeavours of all; how came it to pass, that christianity made so great a progress afterward? How can the clergy of your church, or of ours, pretend that they contribute now, or ever did contribute, to the reformation of mankind? No age, whereof we have any certain anecdotes, can be pointed out, wherein all the vices, that Tully imputes to most of the heathen philosophers, did not prevail among most of the christian divines, with great circumstances of aggravation. They have had not only all the vices incident to human nature in common with other men, but they have had the particular vices of their order, for such there are, and such I shall have occasion to show that there are. Read the entire passage, consult your memory, look round you, and then you shall tell me what you think of Clarke's argument. You shall tell it in my ear. I expect no more; for I know how desirous you are to keep fair with orders, whatever liberties you take with particular men. For my own part, who have not the same discretion, I will say boldly, that the clergy, both of your church and of mine, are, in general, the most negligent of missionaries, and fitter much to hinder by their example,

than

than to promote by their doctrine, the advancement of religion, natural and revealed.

Shall we say, that the sublime doctrines, and abstract arguments of Plato, and other philosophers, were by no means fitted for the bulk and common sort of mankind? Or shall we fix the reason of the little progress they made, in their ignorance of the whole scheme, order, and state of things? Should we do both, like the author of the Evidences, we should, like him, contradict ourselves; because, if the doctrines of Plato, for instance, were too sublime, and his arguments too abstract, they must have been much more so had he known and gone about to explain all that is called the whole scheme, order, and state of things. It is marvellous to consider, how many of the most refined precepts of christian morality were taught by him, several centuries before Christ and his apostles taught them. Such were those about imitating God, and others that have been mentioned above. It is still more marvellous to consider, that some of the most profound mysteries of christianity were taught by this philosopher, several centuries before they were revealed. Such was the doctrine of the Trinity, in explaining which, if he advanced some errours, he did no more than many christian divines have done, from the most early ages of the church; no more than we are bound to believe that Whiston and Clarke himself have done, unless we renounce that orthodox profession of faith, which all the fathers of the church have held, from those of the Nicæan

Nicæan council down to Dr. Waterland, and my good uncle the Earl of Nottingham. How this may be accounted for, I do not presume to determine, though I have somewhere or other presumed to guess. But this we may affirm*, that if Plato had known the method of God's governing the world, his design in creating mankind, the original dignity of human nature, the ground and circumstances of men's present corrupt condition, the manner of the divine interposition necessary to their recovery, and the glorious end to which God intended finally to conduct them, as well as he knew the system of a Trinity, of a future judgment, of a Heaven, a Hell, and a Purgatory; he, who is so often unintelligible now, would have been vastly more so. He would have been, therefore, less fitted than he was for the bulk and common sort of mankind, and for the great work of reformation.

Shall we say, finally, that the heathen philosophers were unequal to this great work, because their doctrines were not enforced by a divine authority? Even this reason will prove nothing; for the philosophers and lawgivers did enforce their doctrines and laws by a divine authority, and call a higher principle to the assistance of philosophy, than bare reason. Zoroaster, Hostanes, the magi, the prophets and seers of Egypt, Minos, Pythagoras, Numa, in short, all the fathers of heathen theology, all those who founded or re-

* Evid. p. 176.

formed

formed religions and commonwealths, made their pretensions, and their pretensions were admitted. They were impostors, but they passed in vulgar opinion for persons divinely inspired and commissioned. Some good they did, but little that was permanent, not because they wanted the opinion of a divine authority for them, but because they employed it absurdly, or because even this opinion was not sufficient:

To what now are we reduced? Since the precepts and motives, offered by the best philosophers, have been never able to reform mankind effectually*, without the assistance of some higher principle, and some divine authority, nor even when both of these have been assumed, may we not be led to think, that such a reformation is impracticable? May we not conclude, from the experience of all ages, that no means can bring it about, and those which have been employed, less than any? There is a perpetual conflict in the breast of every man, who endeavours to restrain his appetites, to govern his passions, and to make reason, as Tully expresses it, the law of his life†. Just such a conflict there is between virtue and vice, in the great commonwealth of mankind. If the conflict was not maintained by religious and civil institutions, the human state would be intolerable; and though it be maintained, as the success is various, the state is very imperfect. The method taken to fix this success on the right

* Evid. p. 198. † Tusc. Quest. ib.

side,

side, by calling in artificial theology, has contributed more to subdue reason, than vice and immorality. Reason has been laid aside, natural religion has been no longer solely, nor so much as directly, concerned in the contest. Authority has usurped the place of one, superstition of the other; and these two have been opposed, almost alone, to the torrent of human passions, and to the disorders of mankind, in all the countries of the world; so that, wherever philosophy and reason could lift up their heads, they have had the remedy to combat as well as the disease.

XXVII.

THERE is a country, into the antiquities of which we look further back than into those of any other, and where we may find examples to confirm and illustrate what is here said, by comparing the effects of natural religion, unmixed and uncorrupted, with those of artificial theology and superstition. The country I mean is China, whose traditions and histories deserve, at least, as much credit as those of ancient nations, that have been known to us longer, and which our scholars quote with so much assurance. Now natural religion seems to have been preserved more pure and unmixed in this country than in any other, and for a longer time from that when it was first inhabited, and government was first established,

ed in it*. The ancient Chinese held it unlawful to dispute about the divine nature, about the attributes of God, the exercise of his power, or the conduct of his providence; and it seems very plain, that the concise manner in which their sages expressed themselves, whenever they spoke of the Supreme Being, and upon which their refining successors have endeavoured to found, in part at least, their atheism, proceeded from this modest, this reasonable, and this pious principle. They observed the order of nature, and from thence they deduced all the rules of private morality and publick policy. To compare his conduct with the law of Heaven and Earth†, is the character of a perfect prince, in the works of Confucius. That reason should preside over passion, was the great rule of life, and to walk according to it, was to walk in the great high way of life‡. Thus they were led, by simple and plain reasonings, from the works to the will of God, and to three kinds of moral obligations, to those of an individual, of the member of a family, and of the member of a political society. Bare reason enforced so well the practice of natural religion, by the laws and constitutions of this empire, and the duties of it became so habitual by education and custom, that this people enjoyed, under their two first imperial families, which continued eleven hundred

* Scient. Sihica.

† Confert res à se gestas cum Cœli Terræque lege.

‡ Orbis universalis regula, regia humani generis via.

years, all the blessings of publick and private virtue, that humanity is capable of enjoying. So we must understand the descriptions of this golden age; for though the Chinese lived in a state of innocence and simplicity while it lasted, yet as they were subject, like other nations, to physical evils, so may we assure ourselves that they were neither infallible nor impeccable, nor therefore entirely exempt from moral evil. It is enough for the honour of reason, and of natural religion, that these principles, enforced by civil authority, appear in this instance to have answered the purposes of true religion much better by themselves, than these purposes have been ever answered by all the expedients, and all the adventitious helps, that philosophers, legislators, and priests have devised.

Whether any other nation afforded an example of the same kind, we know not. But this we know, that when other nations begin to appear, they appear already under the influence of absurd theology and gross superstition, and that the Chinese began in the same remote antiquity to fall into the same errours, and all the consequences of them. Under their third imperial family, the affectation of imagining and unfolding mysteries, and of explaining the first principle of all things, grew into fashion among them, and the table of Fohi, or the book Yekim, which is nothing more than a draught of sixty-four figures, composed of three hundred and eighty-four lines, some broken, and some entire, furnished to the studious labours

of

of Venvam and Cheucum, and other commentators, as much sublime knowledge as ever the first chapter of Genesis furnished to a profound cabalist or whimsical divine. From the various changes, and different combinations of these lines, they proceeded, as Pythagoras did from numbers, and Plato from immaterial forms and incorporeal essences, to erect systems of natural and moral philosophy. When they had once departed from simplicity and truth, in the search of mystery, they soon imagined themselves capable of attaining unattainable knowledge; the most chimerical passed for real, and they boasted of nothing less than to explain the whole scheme, order, and state of things. Thus reason was abused by pretended science, and natural religion was deformed by metaphysical speculations, and superstitious devotions.

Li Lao Kium was a philosopher of the same age with Confucius, and both of them of the same with Pythagoras. Whether the Chinese and the Samian had the same masters, I know not. But if they had, these masters were rather Indian gymnosophists than Hebrew prophets. Several circumstances incline to think so. The dogma, particularly, in the Taosu, where it is said, that the first reason produced one, one two, two three, and three all things, is a jargon very like to that of Pythagoras, which Diogenes Laertius has preserved, which he and Li Lao Kium might have learned in India, but which there is no pretence to suspect that the latter could have learned in

Palestine. The Chinese taught the same moral philosophy that had been always taught in China, but he took advantage of the metaphysical folly which prevailed at that time, and which even Confucius had countenanced, to broach a new and a most extravagant theology. He founded it, perhaps, on some interpretations of the book Ye-kim; but however he founded it, he established it with so much success, that he himself was worshipped at last: temples and statues were erected to many of his sect, all that imposture could impose on credulity was imposed, natural theology was abominably corrupted, and a ridiculous external service took the place, in great measure, of real virtue and true devotion.

This sect prepared the way for another, which had prevailed in India near a thousand years before our christian æra, but was not introduced into China till sixty-five years after it. This sect was that of Foë, who raised a spiritual empire in the East, that has equalled, if not exceeded, all others, under different forms and appellations, in extent and duration. Foë lived in a desert, under the care of four jogues, or gymnosophists, till he was thirty years old. Then he appeared in the world, assumed divinity, and declared himself to be the saviour of men, for whose sakes he had condescended to be born, that he might recover them from their errours, expiate their sins, and lead them into the way of being happy hereafter; for he threatened future punishments to those who did not believe in him, nor submit to his doctrines.

trines. Voluminous legends of miracles, wrought at his birth, and in the course of his life, were published by ten of his disciples. Well might they be voluminous, since his pretended mission lasted nine and forty years, and we may assure ourselves that attestations were not wanting, since the number of proselytes he made in that time was immense. They were divided into different classes. To believe implicitly, and to observe the rules of morality were required from all, and the least credible austerities were practised by some, as they continue to be at this day.

Both these religions are still subsisting in China. What has been the effect of them? The ancient laws and customs of the empire are inviolably kept, and good government is maintained by them, independently of these. But are the Chinese grown better men? No. They build monasteries for bonzes, they endow them richly, they adorn their pagods or temples, they prostrate themselves, they pray, they make their offerings, and they burn gilded paper in them, after which they rob or cheat without scruple, and indulge themselves in practices which natural religion abhors the most. There is something worse than this. The true principles of religion being removed, and these fantastick principles placed in lieu of them, the foundation of all religion is sapped at once. They who cannot persuade themselves, that the religion they see practised is a service fit to be paid to a Supreme Being, nor consequently required by any such being, slide

easily from the belief, that there is no religion, to the belief that there is no God. This happened in China, where the literati, or learned men, are in truth a sect of atheists, and theism seems to be the portion of the vulgar alone. Such has been, and is at this day the effect of artificial theology and superstitious devotion in that country. The Jesuits, from whose relations, as from the best authority in this case, I have taken what I have said on the subject, pretend that Foë, or Xaca himself, gave occasion to the atheism that has been since established, by declaring, before his death, to some of his disciples, his inward doctrine, which transpired afterward. He confessed, they say, that he had concealed the truth under the veil of types, of metaphors, and parables; that vacuity and inanition were the first principles of all things, beyond which nothing was to be sought, because nothing was to be found. What is meaned by the terms that the Jesuits translate "vacuum et inane," I know not, nor is it worth our while to guess. Thus much is plain, the consequence of refining in matters of religion, beyond the obvious dictates of nature and reason, has been superstition, and enthusiasm, or atheism, not reformation of manners, in China.

XXVIII.

If we return now to those countries, with which we are better acquainted, we shall find in them

them much the same course of things. We shall find, indeed, natural religion no where established in it's full extent and purity, as it seems to have been once in China. Some first principles of it were known and practised by people the least civilsed, as Justin* represents them to have been by the Scythians. No people were wholly ignorant of them, no sort of government could subsist without them. But then, as their light shone dimly among these half savages, through the clouds of a superstition I somewhere called natural, and not improperly, we shall find this light actually obscured, and put out, in great part, among the most civilised and learned nations. Instead of dispelling these clouds, and improving natural religion, they had increased, by fantastick knowledge, what ignorance had begun, and we trace the same ill consequences of pretended revelations, and artificial theology, on this side the Ganges, as we have traced, on the other, the abominable consequences which have followed establishments made on the ruins of natural religion.

It is true, that the heathen philosophers were unable to propagate natural religion, and to reform the manners of men effectually. But it is not true, that they were so for the reasons Clarke gives, which have been shown, I think, to be futile and insufficient. They were so for another reason principally, which has been touched, and

* Lib. 2, c. 2.

requires to be more fully developed. The reason is, that they proceeded, in the doctor's own method, to lay the first principles of all religion, and to reason from them.

The doctor, whom I cite so often, because his book is the last I have read on this subject, and has been received with the greatest applause, repeats over and over, and very dogmatically, such maxims as these, "that goodness, and justice, and "all the moral attributes, are the same in God, as "they are in our ideas; that the relations, "respects, and proportions of things are just such "as they appear to be to our understandings; "that from hence there results a rule, which is "the nature and reason of things; that this rule "is common to God and man; that it is the law "of all his actions, in the government of the "world; and that, as it always determines his "will, it should always determine ours." From this assumed knowledge of the divine attributes, and of the abstract nature and reason of things, the most extravagant opinions concerning the will of God, and the most audacious judgments on the conduct and dispensations of his providence, have been deduced. How should it be otherwise? They who reason "à posteriori" from the constitution of the human system, and from the works of God, have indeed a rule to go by, precise, invariable, certain. But they who reason "à priori" from the moral attributes of God, and from the abstract nature and reason of things, have no such rule. Theists will concur in ascribing

ing all possible perfections to the Supreme Being; but they will always differ when they descend into any detail, and presume to be particular about them, as they always have differed in their notions of these perfections, and consequently in the applications of them. I have said, I believe, already, and I shall not recal what is said, agreeably to universal and constant experience, that the eternal reason of things, founded in the consideration of their abstract nature, is, for the most part, as we see it employed by believers and infidels, by the orthodox and the heterodox, nothing better than the reason of party, of prejudice, of system, and of profession. Yet this is the method which some men prescribe, and which Clarke * describes to be, of all others, the best and clearest, the certainest and most universal, that the light of nature affords, to discover the will of God in matters of morality, and to account for the dispensations and conduct of his providence. This author goes even further, and the other method is styled by him †, a collateral consideration, which may come in aid of the former, nothing more. This other method, however, extends as far as human wants require, and human knowledge can reach. Where it does not extend, the want is imaginary, and the knowledge fantastick; and if philosophers and divines had aimed at establishing the belief of a Supreme Being, and the

* Evid. p. 119. † Ib.

duties

duties of natural religion alone, they might, and they would have been contented with it.

But they meaned something more. They aimed at superiority and fame, at power and riches. He who had never presumed to define the moral attributes of an All-perfect Being, who contented himself to know that such a being existed by the necessity of his nature, and that his wisdom and power are infinite; he who had never troubled himself about eternal respects, relations, and proportions of things, and collected the will, as he collected the existence of this Being, "à poste-"riori;" he, I say, knew as much of God, and of his duty to God and man, as natural religion required that he should know. But it was for the interest of philosophers and priests, that men should think there was much more to be known; and if those of Egypt had taught nothing more than natural theology, instead of theurgick magick, nothing more than the plain duties of religion, instead of mysterious rites, it is highly probable the Mercuries would not have been honoured as they were, in all succeeding ages, nor the clergy have possessed a third part of the revenue of the kingdom.

Such as have been mentioned were the principles on which artificial theology arose among the heathens, and as the principles were laid neither in reason nor truth, which are always one, it is no wonder, that this theology became as various as errour could make it. Some of the motives to invent and embrace it were such likewise as have been

been mentioned. I say some; because we may well conceive, that when principles, not only false, but vague like these, had been once adopted by the delirium of metaphysicks, the enthusiasm of superstition, or the prejudices of ignorance, the men who had been accustomed to reason upon them, and to take for true every thing that use had made familiar, might run into the greatest absurdities, sometimes without having any bad motive, nay, with a pious intention of promoting true religion, and of attaching men to it, by a greater authority, and by greater hopes and fears. This might be the case of many, as we shall easily believe, if we consider what has passed in later days. But, however it was brought about, art took every where the place of nature, and faith of reason. Artificial theology spread far and wide; philosophers taught it; lawgivers established it; priests improved it; here it was employed to enforce, there it was substituted to natural religion; the main principles of it, and even particular opinions and local institutions, have been variously mingled in different systems, and are to be discerned in them even now. This has happened naturally, and almost necessarily. All these systems lean on certain primitive notions, which the human mind is so prone to frame or to receive. The same affections and passions maintain them, work upon them, and direct them in different imaginations. The matter is the same, the form alone is changed.

XXIX.

XXIX.

AMONG many doctrines that were taught by those who pretended to explain the whole scheme and order of divine œconomy with respect to man, that of rewards and punishments in a future state was one. It began to be taught long before we have any light into antiquity, and where we begin to have any, we find it established. How powerful is the desire of continuing to exist? How predominant is the pride of the human heart? Nothing seems more natural to man, than to wish to live without restraint or fear; and yet how ready was the multitude, in the pagan world, to embrace the hope of immortality, though it was accompanied with the fear of damnation! Like the elementary people of the cabalists*, one may think, they would have chosen to be damned eternally, rather than to cease to exist. But every one was flattered by a system, that raised him in imagination, above corporeal nature, as every one was at liberty to flatter himself further, that he should pass this immortality in the fellowship of the gods, "in contubernio deorum."

The hypothesis of a life after this, especially when it was accompanied by that of a life preceding this, which was founded on a supposed metempsychosis, that several systems of religion admitted, served two purposes. It furnished an answer to the accusation which atheists brought, and which theists were too ready to admit in

* See Borri's Letters.

those

those days, as well as in ours, of unjust dispensations of Providence, in the distribution of good and evil. This purpose seems very unnecessary to me, who am firmly persuaded, that the accusation is a mere sophism, and void of any foundation. But the other purpose was, no doubt, very necessary, since the belief of future rewards and punishments could not fail to have some effect on the manners of men, to encourage virtue, and to restrain vice. For this purpose the doctrine was strongly inculcated from time immemorial. Egypt was the greatest mistress of religions as well as of arts and sciences, and the doctrines and rites of her church were dispersed wherever she sent her colonies; these of the "mythologia de inferis" among the rest. Whatever Melampus, Cadmus, and others carried into Greece, Orpheus carried these. He propagated them by his verses and his institutions. But it was your Homer who spread them most, and gave them the greatest vogue, by his Odyssey and Iliad, those stupendous works, which Virgil alone could imitate, and you translate, with success.

One cannot see, without surprise, a doctrine so useful to all religions, and therefore incorporated into all the systems of paganism, left wholly out of that of the Jews. Many probable reasons might be brought to show, that it was an Egyptian doctrine before the Exode, and this particularly, that it was propagated from Egypt so soon at least afterward, by all those who were instructed, like Moses, in the wisdom of that people. He transported

ported much of this wisdom into the scheme of religion and government, which he gave the Israelites; and among other things certain rites, which may seem to allude or have a remote relation to this very doctrine. Though this doctrine, therefore, had not been that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he might have adopted it, with as little scruple as he did many customs and institutions purely Egyptian. He had to do with a rebellious, but a superstitious people. In the first character, they made it necessary, that he should neglect nothing which might add weight to his ordinances, and contribute to keep them in awe. In the second, their disposition was extremely proper to receive such a doctrine, and to be influenced by it. Shall we say, that an hypothesis of future rewards and punishments was useless among a people who lived under a theocracy, and that the future judge of other people was their immediate judge and king, who resided in the midst of them, and who dealed out rewards and punishments on every occasion? Why then were so many precautions taken? Why was a solemn covenant made with God, as with a temporal prince? Why were so many promises and threatenings of rewards and punishments, temporal indeed, but future and contingent, as we find in the book of Deuteronomy, most pathetically held out by Moses? Would there have been any more impropriety in holding out those of one kind, than those of another, because the Supreme Being, who disposed and ordered both, was in a particular manner present among

among them? Would an addition of rewards and punishments more remote, but eternal, and in all respects far greater, to the catalogue, have had no effect? I think neither of these things can be said.

What shall we say then? How came it to pass this addition was not made? I will mention what occurs to me, and shall not be over solicitous about the weight, that my reflection may deserve. If the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state, had been revealed to Moses, that he might teach them to the Israelites, he would have taught them most certainly. But he did not teach them. They were, therefore, not revealed to him. Why they were not so revealed, some pert divine, or other, will be ready to tell you. For me, I dare not presume to guess. But this I may presume to advance, that since these doctrines were not revealed by God, to his servant Moses, it is highly probable, that this legislator made a scruple of teaching them to the Israelites, howsoever well instructed he might be in them himself, and howsoever useful to government he might think them. The superstitious and idolatrous rites of the Egyptians, like those of other nations, were founded on the polytheism and the mythology that prevailed, and were suffered to prevail among the vulgar, and that made the sum of their religion. It seemed to be a point of policy to direct all these absurd opinions and practices to the service of government, instead of attempting to root them out. But then the great difference

difference between rude and ignorant nations, and such as were civilised and learned like the Egyptians, seems to have been this, that the former had no other system of religion than these absurd opinions and practices, whereas the latter had an inward, as well as an outward doctrine. There is reason to believe, that natural theology and natural religion had been taught and practised in the ancient Theban dynasty; and it is probable, that they continued to be an inward doctrine in the rest of Egypt, while polytheism, idolatry, and all the mysteries, all the impieties, and all the follies of magick, were the outward doctrine. Moses might be let into a knowledge of both, and under the patronage of the princess, whose foundling he was, he might be initiated into those mysteries, where the secret doctrine alone was taught, and the outward was exploded. But we cannot imagine, that the children of Israel, in general, enjoyed the same privilege, nor that the masters were so lavish to their slaves of a favour so distinguished, and often so hard to obtain. No. The children of Israel knew nothing more than the outside of the religion of Egypt, and if the doctrine we speak of was known to them, it was known only in the superstitious rites, and with all the fabulous circumstances in which it was dressed up and presented to vulgar belief. It would have been hard, therefore, to teach, or to renew this doctrine in the minds of the Israelites, without giving them an occasion the more to recal the polytheistical fables, and practise the idolatrous rites

rites they had learned during their captivity. Rites and ceremonies are often so equivocal, that they may be applied to very different doctrines. But when they are so closely connected with one doctrine, that they are not applicable to another, to teach the doctrine is, in some sort, to teach the rites and ceremonies, and to authorise the fables on which they are founded. Moses, therefore, being at liberty to teach this doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state, or not to teach it, might very well choose the latter; though he indulged the Israelites, on account of the hardness of their hearts, and by the divine permission, as it is presumed, in several observances and customs, which did not lead directly, though even they did so, perhaps, in consequence, to the polytheism and idolatry of Egypt. But I return to Greece.

XXX.

THE seeds of artificial theology and superstitious devotion, for they go always together, which Orpheus and other Egyptian missionaries had sowed, were cultivated by theistical philosophers, and the doctrine of a future state particularly. If Pythagoras reported, that the soul of Hesiod was tied to a brazen column, and the soul of Homer hung upon a tree, for their temerity, in ascribing human passions, and the rules of human conduct, even to the father of gods and men, as some traditions say, one would be tempted to

that he applied this doctrine of a future state to enforce natural religion alone. But we should deceive ourselves greatly if we thought so. We have none of his writings, if he did write. But we know from Diogenes Laertius, from Porphyry, from Jamblichus, and from other authorities, that he imported from Egypt and the eastern nations an immense stock of the theology and superstition which were in vogue among them. If inspiration was not the least, it was not the greatest of his pretensions. He enveloped his doctrines in mystery to make them pass for divine, laid the foundations of them out of the ken of human reason, and acquired a great reputation in metaphysicks and divine philosophy, by the usual method, by not being understood.

I pass to Socrates and Plato. The first devoted himself to the reformation of his countrymen with unexampled zeal, and as St. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles in revealed, we may say, that Socrates was the same in natural religion. There was greater simplicity, and less heat of imagination, in the master than the scholar. Sober prose was the language of one. A poetical enthusiasm was that of the other. One was fitter to reform his own age by his discourses, the other to create the admiration of posterity by his writings. Good sense and truth served the purpose of one much less than wit and beauty of style served the purpose of the other. The very extravagancies of Plato, for which he deserved at least as much as Homer to be banished out of his own Utopia, recom-

recommended him to after ages; and there have been many, as there are still some, who would say, like Tully, in one of his rants, "errare me- "herculè malo cum Platone, quam cum istis vera "sentire". But notwithstanding the difference I make, and which is true, in general, between these philosophers; notwithstanding the accusation which Xenophon, who took minutes of the discourses of Socrates, laid against Plato for corrupting the doctrine of their common master; it is certain, and Xenophon himself might be brought to prove, that if Socrates did not say every thing which Plato made him say, yet he lost himself sometimes in clouds of metaphysicks, as much as he was afraid to do in those of physicks, from whence he has been so much applauded for bringing philosophy down to the affairs of human life, to things of real use, and to knowledge within our reach. How could it be otherwise? Socrates was a great reasoner "à priori," as well as Plato, even in the establishment of natural religion. To contemplate God, or the eternal ideas which exist in God, and to abstract the soul from corporeal sense, were soon made, by the encouragement which this school, the senate of philosophy, gave to such theology, the two great objects of it; so that the best of theistical philosophers were in effect Eunomians, long before the bishop of Cyzicus lived, who boasted that he knew God as well as God knew himself. Such were the principles of that artificial theology, which the Greeks had brought from Egypt

and Asia, which they carried back thither with all their own improvements, which was dispersed from these countries north and south, east and west, and in the glare of which men lost sight of natural religion.

What philosophers began, priests carried on, with no small advantage to themselves, but without any to religion. I will not say, as generally as some have done, that they made it no part of their business to teach the people virtue, nor any thing more than the tricks of religion *, because it is not strictly true, and Mr. Locke, in his zeal against priestcraft, asserted a little too much. The schools of the philosophers were indeed the schools of morality; but even the tricks of religion had some intention to promote it. This only I will say, and it is enough: The reformation of mankind was not their principal aim, and the little they did to deter men from vice was done in a method that could not fail to have, as, in fact it had, a contrary effect. The observation of ceremonies, of feasts, and solemnities, that had no foundation in reason, and that were arbitrarily described by ecclesiastical discipline, though sometimes under the pretence of revelation, were made the chief means of pleasing the Gods, and of pacifying them when they were angry. From hence two great mischiefs arose. Religion became form and ceremony, and the observation of forms and ceremonies of greater moment than the practice of moral duties, though the practice of these

* Vid. Reasonab. of Christianity.

was

was recommended too. This cannot be illustrated better than by the example of your church. No one can say, that she allows men to cheat and rob one another. On the contrary, she requires that they should be just in all their dealings. But yet absolution for fraud or theft will be obtained from the priest, who cannot give it for eating a slice of meat on the vigil of some saint. Thus artificial theology and superstition oppressed true religion, and priests found the secret of persuading mankind, that God was better pleased with obedience to their laws than to his own.

Thus too sins were multiplied; and with them the terrours of an incensed deity. But the same priests, who spread the terrours, showed easy means of expiating the sins that caused them. Wherever superstition prevails, those sins, which the priests make, by forbidding what the law of nature has left indifferent, or by imposing duties that have no relation to true religion, will be always esteemed the greatest. Sins, therefore, which are no sins, may be expiated very properly by punishments, which are no punishments, and several ceremonies performed may atone for several omitted. But the abuse is abominable when the same expiations and atonements are applied to real sins, and priests do little else than dispense arbitrarily with the laws of nature, which are the laws of God. That no repentance was required in these cases by the pagan divines, I do not say. The very forms used in the celebration of their mysteries seem to show, that it was, and that the impenitent could not be initiated.

But this very repentance was little, if any thing, more than matter of form, confession, some temporary penance, ablutions, purifications, and other tricks of regeneration. Amendment, without these, was impracticable or insufficient, and with these, which might be repeated as often as occasion required, unnecessary, so that Mr. Locke had reason to say the priests sold good pennyworths. On the whole matter, if men were more powerfully allured to virtue, and deterred from vice, by the hopes and fears of a future state held out to every one in particular, than they could be by the consequences to mankind in general of observing or violating natural religion, and by the force of civil laws; yet, in the religions we speak of, one part of the system defeated the other. Some body has observed, Mezeray I think, that the monstrous crimes so frequent in the devout, that is in the bigot ages of the christian church, were encouraged by this very devotion. Men were enough bigots to believe, that the pardon of God might be obtained for money, or possessions given to his priests, and that crimes of the blackest dye might be expiated by undertaking a pilgrimage, in person or by proxy, to Rome, "ad limen apostolorum." This traffick, for such it was, became so frequent, that, even in times less ancient, the church of Rome found it necessary to publish a tariff, or book of rates, which I have seen in print *,

* In the late Charles Bernard's Library.

wherein

wherein the price is set over against every sin, lest purchasers should be imposed upon; and such sins are specified, as the most polluted imagination would hardly conceive. If this abuse was not so exorbitant in the pagan as in the christian church, something of the same kind must have been practised wherever men were taught to fear an angry God, and to believe, at the same time, that they could pacify him with offerings and sacrifices, or, to use an expression of Plato's, compound with him as they would with a usurer.

This single reason will account better for the small progress that was made by the heathen philosophers in reforming mankind, than all those that Clarke brings. But there is another, and a greater mischief still behind. Religion gave occasion to atheism, as dogmatism did to scepticism. Superstitious worship, founded in absurd opinions concerning the divine nature, had an effect in that age, which I wish it had never had since. Diagoras, for instance, might assume, that such a superstitious worship as he beheld could be paid to fictitious gods alone, and seeing no other worship, he might conclude there were no other gods. From the ridiculous worship, and the absurd theology, that prevailed in all the countries they knew, both he and Theodorus, who lived more than twenty olympiads after him, and many more avowed or concealed atheists, might draw the same conclusions, and be mad enough not to discern, that a few local observa-

tions were not sufficient to invalidate a proposition that might be true independently of them, and that there might be a God, and a true worship of him, though all the gods of Greece were fictitious, and the adoration of them was mere superstition.

These men were plunged at once, and by indignation, as it were, into atheism; while others went into it by dint of philosophical refinements more leisurely, less directly, and some of them against the primitive doctrines of their own schools.

XXXI.

Let us consider what happened in the academy, and what the consequence was of all that metaphysical theology which the founder was supposed, by his immediate successors, and by other philosophers, to have taught dogmatically. If Speusippus, Xenocrates, Crates, Crantor, and Polemo did not teach exactly the same dogmas, they taught on the same principles of chimerical knowledge that their founder had done; and, in this sense, it might be said, "quæ acceperant "tuebantur." Other sects of dogmatists arose at the same time, and among the rest, one which gave a principal occasion to that revolution in the academy, which Arcesilaus began, and Carneades improved. The sect I mean was that of the Stoicks, concerning whom it is true to say, that their theology and their moral philosophy were alike

alike absurd. By one they drew the divinity down to be a sort of plastick, intelligent, fiery nature. By the other, they strained their notions of human wisdom and virtue so high, that man was obliged to God for neither: he gave them to himself, and God and man were in these respects nearly on a level.

Zeno, who founded the portick, had been an auditor in the academy, and was accused of pirating his philosophy from the lessons of Xenocrates and Polemo, when he set up his school as a rival to the other. Polemo had taught, that the word was God, for instance; and Zeno had adopted this among other extravagancies. When the contest ran high between him and Arcesilaus, the latter saw by this instance, and by many, that he lay under a double disadvantage. He had the doctrines of his own school to defend, and it was no easy task, to defend by reason a system of imagination. His adversaries had often the authority of his own school, and of the founder of it, to urge against him, when he attacked them even in their weakest parts. He changed, therefore, his method of philosophising. No matter whether he did it, as Lucullus says, by introducing a new one; or, as Cicero affirms*, by reviving and avowing the old one. When the maxim was established, that nothing could be known, "nihil cognosci, nihil percipi, nihil sciri posse," the academician could always attack, and never

* In Academ.

be

be attacked. This I take to have been the political secret of Arcesilaus. But whatever his secret was, he established scepticism: and Socrates and Plato had given him but too much reason to make it the academical principle. As there was little difference, except in name, between the second and third academy, so there was little that it is easy or worth our while to ascertain, between this sect, and another founded about the same time, by that melancholy madman Pyrrho. One acknowledged probability: both denied certainty.

The Pyrrhonian is against all sides: and all sides are against him. He is a common enemy, "hostis philosophici generis." The academician would pass, if he could, for a neuter, who is for no side, nor against any; or else for a trimmer, who changes sides often, and finds the probable sometimes on one, sometimes on the other. Tully, most of whose works are come down to us, is a standing portrait in our sight of the true academician. In his Academical Questions he opposes to Lucullus the variety and the repugnancy of all the philosophical systems. In his books about the nature of gods, he makes Cotta oppose the Epicureans and the Stoicians both in their turns. The conclusion is always against embracing any of these systems, and so far doubtless he concluded well. But here lay the errour. When he assented to the probability of some, and to the certainty of no proposition whatever, he confounded truth with falsehood, as Lucullus objects to him that he did; just as much as the sect of Lucullus, or any

any other dogmatist, who put every thing they advanced into the same class of certainty. The Stoicians would have assented to this proposition, "it is now light in a full sunshine," with the same assurance, and with no more, than they would have assented at any other time to this, "the "world is a wise being." Such has been the dogmatical impertinence, for it deserves this name, of all those in every age, and in every sect of philosophy or religion, who have imagined they could impose by authority, or who have had the affectation of framing complete systems, concerning the universal order and state of things, divine and human. It is this practice which had laid the men who submitted to it under a sort of intellectual tyranny, and which had driven those, who have not submitted to it, into a sort of intellectual anarchy. The fault of all lies at the door of the dogmatist; for there is in science, as there is in government, a middle between tyranny and anarchy, far better than either of them. I will explain myself by two examples; and they shall be very modern, that the ancients may not blush alone.

One of the Crozats, a family well known at Paris, went to take his leave of Clement the Eleventh, before he returned from Rome. The Holy Father asked, whether he had finished his purchase of a certain collection of paintings. Crozat answered, that he had not; that there were several obscene pieces in the collection, and that the confessors, in his country, would not allow him

him to keep them. The Pope reflected on this occasion, with no small concern, on the number of Jansenists, who teach a more rigid morality, and who abound in the church of France. However, said the Pontiff, you might conclude your purchase, because it would be easy to sell such of those paintings, as your confessor would not suffer you to keep. Crozat replied, that the same confessor, who would not suffer him to keep them, would as little permit him to sell them, and thereby contribute to the sin of another. Clement smiled at the scruple, and proposed an expedient. Though your confessor, said his Holiness, should object, if you sold these pictures to catholicks, he could have no objection to make, if you sold them to hereticks, to the English for instance. That is, the English neither believe in me, nor in any thing like me; they had, therefore, as good believe in nothing; they are, therefore, damned, and a sin the more will do none of them any great harm.

The other example shall be that of a better divine perhaps than the Pope, but of as great a dogmatist. Clarke undertook to demonstrate not only the being and attributes of God, and the obligations of natural religion by reason; but even the truth and certainty of christian revelation. Now the latter of these being his ultimate view, it was necessary that he should prove the two first in such a manner, and by such arguments, as as were not always the best and the most persuasive, but were the fittest to demonstrate, on pretended

tended grounds of reason, such a scheme, order, and state of things, as were agreeable to christian revelation, and to the received principles of the church. If he could not carry reason with him throughout, he resolved to carry some appearances of it, and for that purpose he argues in such a manner, and attempts to establish such notions from the first, as he flattered himself would secure these appearances to him on every part of his subject, assisted with all the skill, all the subtilty, and all the plausibility, he was able to employ. When he is to prove, that the first Cause is an intelligent cause, without which he had proved in effect nothing, he had recourse to arguments "à posteriori." There are, indeed, no others, and he owns as much; for which reason he might have been more favourable to them, than I have observed already that he was. But he could not have established by them some things, that he hoped to establish by the others, as I shall have occasion to show more fully, when I come to vindicate Providence against the joint accusations of atheists and divines. All that I mean, and that is to my purpose to observe here, is this. A necessary connection between the natural and moral attributes of God no man, who believes in him, will deny; all the perfections of an all-perfect Being must be consistent and connected; to be otherwise would be imperfection. Divines, therefore, will have nothing on this head with which to reproach any true theist; and they had best take care that the true theist has no just occasion to reproach

From such knowledge as this, knowledge which no man ever had, nor could have, the whole system of artificial theology, which corrupted natural religion, was deduced. It served in no sort to promote the reformation of mankind, and it involved the professors of it in a thousand difficulties and disputes, that rendered them ridiculous to one another, and every one, perhaps to himself, unless there were some as enthusiastical and as mad in those days as Plotinus, Porphyry, Jamblichus, and others grew to be, after the beginning of christianity. Thus it came about, that the great theological, that is, the Platonick school went from one extreme into another. It suited the vanity of these philosophers better to assert, that nothing was to be known in general, than to own, that the reputation of their school in particular had been raised on a fantastick science: and after exercising their wit to prove that they were masters of divine knowledge, they exercised it to prove that they knew nothing, no, not the existence of a Supreme Being.

The truth is, that the philosophy of the academy became little more than an exercise of wit and eloquence. Tully purges himself, in one place, from the imputation of engaging in the academical sect on these motives, or on that of loving to dispute*; and yet he confesses, in the second Tusculan, that the custom of disputing on every side pleased him, because it was "maxima di-

* Ostentatione aliquâ . . . . aut studio certandi.

"cendi

" cendi exercitatio." But whatever engaged him in it, his engagements carried him very far, as we may see in his books of the Nature of the Gods. I cite these, because they serve extremely to my purpose, which is to show, by contrasting the Stoicians and the Academicians together (for the Epicureans cannot have their place here, though they too were dogmatists) how unfit the philosophers of both these schools were, from very opposite causes and different extremes, to establish the fundamental principle of true religion, or, indeed, to establish any thing. The discourse of Balbus is a rhapsody of sense and nonsense, of very good arguments " à posteriori", that there is a God, " esse aliquod numen præstantissimæ mentis," of sophistical syllogisms to prove the same thing " à priori," and of idle traditions, gravely produced, to confirm the whole by fact as well as reason. All this he advances with equal assurance, the weak and the strong, the false and the true. Balbus could do no otherwise. He had the task of explaining and defending artificial not natural theology, superstition not religion. He was obliged, therefore, as all they are whose ultimate end is errour, to proceed from the first on principles ill assumed, to reason falsely, and to conclude precariously, but dogmatically. The discourse of Cotta is an ingenious declamation, wherein he refutes the Stoical system, and renders it ridiculous. But then he disputes so vehemently against it, and his arguments extend so far, that

Tully* makes his own brother accuse the pontiff directly, and himself, by consequence, indirectly, of atheism. " Studio contra Stoicos disserendi, " deos mihi videtur funditus tollere." What says Tully in his own name? He tells his brother, that Cotta disputes in that manner, rather to confute the Stoicks, than to destroy the religion of mankind " . . . magis . . . quam ut hominum deleat " religionem." But Quinctus answers, that is, Tully makes him answer, he was not the bubble of an artifice, employed to save the appearance of departing from the publick religious institutions, " ne communi jure migrare videatur." When you join to this short conversation the expression, which concludes the third book of the nature of the gods, where Tully says very drily, that the disputation of Balbus seemed to him the most probable, " ad veritatis similitudinem propensior," you will see, that if the Academicians did not profess atheism, because they could profess nothing, yet some of them might esteem this to be the most probable opinion, as Tully esteemed that of theism to be, even when the absurdities of the Portick were blended with it, or deduced from it. Thus doubt concerning the existence of any superior Being arose in the same school, from which so much artificial theology had been propagated: and the sublime doctrines of the divine Plato ended in arrant scepticism, as they led to it, and as he designed they should, if the man in the world who admired

* De Divin. l. 1.

admired him the most, who seemed to have lived with him, and who would rather have erred with him, than have been in the right with others, all which are Tully's own professions, knew him better than St. Austin, or any modern pedant.

XXXIII.

THESE first and crude reflections may be sufficient to show, that the heathen philosophers were not unable to reform mankind, for the reasons given by Dr. Clarke, but for reasons of a very different kind. I might even have saved myself the trouble, perhaps, of descending into so many particulars; since it would have been not only an answer "ad hominem," but a full answer to all that can be urged in favour of the same hypothesis, to have asked, whether the reformation, which heathen philosophers could not bring about effectually, has been effected under the Jewish and Christian dispensations? Under these, all the knowledge, and all the means, which are assumed to be necessary, and to have been deficient in the state of paganism, as well as some means really wanting to the philosophers, were amply supplied.

Consider Judaism as a religion given by God himself, in the most ostensible manner, to a people whom he chose to be his peculiar people, whom he separated from the rest of mankind, and with whom he made a solemn covenant. Con-

sider the whole series of miracles, that were wrought to convince, to persuade, to assist and defend, to reward and to punish this people occasionally. Add to all this, that God exercised kingly power among them for a time, and that the Shecinah, or his divine presence over the mercy-seat, continued among them till the destruction of their first temple. Consider this, and then consider, that their history is little else than a relation of their rebelling and repenting, of their proneness to one, and of the extreme difficulty with which they were drawn, even by supernatural means, to the other. Consider, that these rebellions were not those of particular men, surprised and hurried into disobedience by their passions, but national deliberate violations of the law, and defiances of the Supreme Being. Is it possible, that any one, who believes the history of the Bible true, should believe, after he has read it, that the want of a divine authority, and of a principle higher than reason, hindered the heathen philosophers from reforming the world effectually; that they would have succeeded if they had really had them, as they sometimes pretended to them; and that, for this reason, which they were sagacious enough to discover, they desired and expected a revelation? Surely it is impossible.

The Jews had not such continual and immediate communications with God by their high priest and their prophets, after their return from the Babylonian captivity, as before it, neither were they eyewitnesses of such frequent manifestations

of

of his glory and power, as their fathers had been: and yet what a reformation, in point of religion, was wrought among them after the reestablishment of their church and state? How much more zealously and steadily were they attached to their law! This difference was owing, no doubt, to the institution of synagogues in every place where a congregation of ten persons could be assembled, and to other improvements of their ecclesiastical discipline and worship, which had a wonderful effect on the spirit of the people, raised it to enthusiasm, but preserved it orthodox. Socrates and Plato then, to quote no others of the heathen philosophers, might have had the same success, in reforming the manners of men, and in restoring the purity of natural religion at Athens, without any divine mission, that Esdras and Nehemias had at Jerusalem in reviving and improving more effectually the ceremonies and observances of Judaism, by means which experience and good policy suggested to them, if the two Greeks had been, as the two Jews were, the legislators and second founders of the commonwealth.

There is so little pretence to draw the shadow of an argument from the ineffectual endeavours of the heathen philosophers to reform the world, that the world has not been effectually reformed, nor any one nation in it, even by the promulgation of the Gospel, even where christianity has flourished most in speculation and external devotion. The Son of God, God himself, came upon Earth, was born of a woman, lived among men, preached

a new covenant, wrought miracles, sent his disciples to all nations, who established his church among them. What has happened? This church has been so far from reforming mankind, that it stood in need of being itself reformed as soon as it was established. The gates of Hell have not yet prevailed against it, and we are to believe that they never will. But the gates of Hell have shook it extremely in all ages, and the prince of Hell has made from the first most terrible incursions within the pale of it. Much zeal has been expressed about articles of faith, much regard has been paid to the outward service of God; and wealth, and power, and pomp, and dignity have been lavishly bestowed on an order of men, who affect to be thought successors to the apostles, and whose institution is avowedly directed to reform the manners of men, as well as preserve the purity of faith. Every defect, except that of not living up to their doctrines, which is supposed to have rendered the preachers of natural religion incapable of reforming the world, has been supplied in the preachers of revealed religion. The doctrines of these men have been certainly enforced by a divine authority: and they have been assisted by a higher principle than philosophy and bare reason. They had anciently all the advantages of opposition and persecution. They have enjoyed ever since, and during a course of fourteen centuries, all those of support and of favour from civil government, and of blind submission from the people. With all these advantages they have not wrought a more

effectual

effectual reformation. Morality has not been better taught by them, nor better practised under their influence. On the contrary, having united in themselves the two characters of philosophers and priests, they have often sacrificed the former to the latter, not for the sake of revealed religion, which is founded on natural, and can require no such sacrifice, but, like the priests of paganism, for the sake of their craft.

Examples will be brought, I know, in opposition to what is here advanced. Examples of a religious zeal, which prevailed among all the primitive christians, to such a degree, that though some of them declined, many of them courted martyrdom; examples of particular men, who have deserved a sort of apotheosis for the purity of their doctrines and the sanctity of their lives; and examples, on the other hand, of pagan ferocity and cruelty, contrasted with christian moderation and charity. It would not be hard, but it would be a long and invidious task, to show, in a variety of instances, how partially these examples are produced, and these comparisons are made. Let us be content with a few general reflections.

That a religious and euthusiastical zeal animated many of the primitive christians, both the orthodox and the hereticks, is most certain. But to make the example prove what it is designed to prove, this zeal should have been singular, a peculiar effect of Christian revelation; whereas, nothing is, nor has been ever more common. The

zeal of the Jews, while they lived in the midst of revelations and miracles, was not comparable to that which they showed when they had nothing but the foolish comments of Mishnical doctors, instead of one, and enthusiastical visions and superstitious signs, instead of the other. We shall find the same, if we go for examples to many of the pagan nations. We shall find not only particular men, but whole bodies of men, among them, as well as among christians, ready to devote themselves to death, not only for their absurd religions, but for their attachment to a party, or to the most whimsical point of imaginary honour. It is not much to that of revelation, therefore, to ascribe to it what may be the effect of imposture and errour: and enthusiasm is no more a proof of true religion, than martyrdom is of a good cause.

The examples of men, reputed saints for the purity of their doctrine, and the holy austerity of their lives, will avail as little, to show that the christian revelation reformed the world, any more than the endeavours of heathen philosophers. Their doctrines, the doctrines of these saints I mean, were such as related either to the metaphysical speculations of theology, and to the practice of ceremonies and rites established for outward worship and ecclesiastical discipline, or to moral obligations, and the duties of natural religion. About the first and second, it must be confessed, that the pastors of the church were, in those days, as they are in ours, extremely intent. But the disputes that arose among them, on all such

such occasions, and the scandal with which they were carried on by all sides, leave it very doubtful to whom this purity is to be ascribed, and much more probable that it was to be ascribed to none. It seems that no side had a good claim to it, in many cases, while the disputes lasted. When they were determined by councils, however this determination was procured, a standard of purity was assumed to be fixed; and authority did what neither reason nor revelation could do; it ascertained orthodoxy in belief and practice, till new disputes arose, or till old ones were revived. These doctrines and these rites have been so far from reforming the world, that they have promoted, by the disputes raised about them, more hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, than ever was in it before. They have diminished the flames neither of ambition nor avarice. They have added fresh fuel to them, and have kindled new flames of their own. In short, the examples of these saints, with respect to these doctrines, will never prove the utility of revelation: and with respect to those that regard moral obligations, and the duties of natural religion, they either neglected them, or taught them more imperfectly than several of the heathen philosophers. When I say that they neglected them, this I mean. The theology contained in the Gospel lies in a very narrow compass. It is marvellous indeed, but it is plain, and it is employed throughout to enforce natural religion. This seems to be the end, and revealed religion the means, both which it would

have been for the honour of christianity, and for the good of mankind, to have left so. But the saints, that have been quoted, took another course from the first. Instead of making theology, and the external duties of religion, serve as means, they insisted on them as if knowledge in metaphysicks, ceremony, and ecclesiastical dominion, had been the principal ends of revelation. They insisted on them so constantly and so voluminously, that natural religion held but a second place in their system, and that righteousness of faith became more important than righteousness of works. On this account we may say, that they neglected, in some sort, the doctrines of natural religion: they practised them ill, and they could scarce fail to teach them both imperfectly and erroneously; since they derived them, "à priori," from principles of their own theology, and from the ideas they framed of the divine attributes, instead of deriving them "à posteriori" from the constitution of the human system. To this we must ascribe the wild allegories with which they perplexed the plainest dictates of reason, the affected refinements, which are impracticable in any national society, and the immoral doctrines, which ought to have been banished, with the saints who taught them, out of all societies. The charge I bring is not of passion or prejudice, no nor of ignorance. I am able to justify it in all it's parts, by some instances: and if you would see it made good by more, and by more learned authorities, consult such writers as Barbeyrac, who was provoked by a saucy

a saucy monk, to publish his book, " La Moralité " des Pères." Consult other criticks, of whom there are many. Nay, consult the authors who deny his charge: and I will appeal to your judgment on what you can find even in them, provided you weigh the facts in the balance of common sense, and pay no regard to their judgments.

Thus much for purity of doctrine. Much less needs to be said about holiness and austerity of life. The histories of saints have been, in all religions, even more than those of any other eminent persons, little better than panegyrical romances. The reason of which is obvious enough. No man, for instance, is so silly, I presume, at this time, unless he be a rosicrucian, as to give any more credit to the biographers of the Egyptian hermits, Antony and Paul, than to those of Pythagoras, and Apollonius of Thyana. All their relations are stuffed alike with the most evident falsehoods, the most puerile absurdities, and the grossest superstitions; for many of these were common to pagans, Jews, and christians: and yet the first of the biographers I mention, who yield in none of these respects to Porphyry, Jamblichus, Philostratus, or any other compiler of lying legends, were famous saints, Athanasius and Jerom. But further, if we allow the sanctity and austerity of some particular men, or of some particular orders of men, to have been, and to be, as great as they are represented, this will be far from proving the reformation of the world by christianity. There were anciently, among the heathens, Chaldæans, gymno-

gymnosophists, and others, and there are now, both among them and the Mahometans, particular men, and orders of men, of great sanctity of life, nay, of greater than any among christians; if sanctity be to be measured, as they who would make the objection I answer measure it, by austerity. It is unnecessary to quote the instances, which are to be found in all our books of travels. Even Simeon Stylites, who stood fasting and praying on the top of a column so many years together, has been outdone by multitudes. What now can be said? If these examples are not sufficient to prove, that heathen philosophers and Mahometan doctors have reformed the world, will examples of the same, or of an inferior kind, prove that christianity has?

It will not be said, I think, that luxury and debauchery have been restrained by christianity. It was a proverbial saying, "Daphnicis moribus "vivere:" and Cassius, if I remember right, would not suffer his army to encamp at Antioch, lest his soldiers should be corrupted by the manners of the place. But where is the court or city, in which christianity is professed, to which this phrase might not be applied? I know of none, nor was there any good reason to believe there was any such anciently, neither that of Constantine, whatever his panegyrist advances, nor that of Charlemagne, though your church has thought fit for other reasons to make saints of both these princes. Upon this, therefore, divines will be ashamed to insist, or may be easily made so; since

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it is not difficult to show them, that the men of their own order, who did not mend their manners afterward, were famous, even in the fourth century, for following those of Daphne. But it will be sounded high, that the patience, moderation, and charity, which christianity inspires, softened the turbulent, fierce, and cruel temper of paganism, and wrought, by doing this, a wonderful reformation in the world. You must remember, that this fact has been asserted to be undeniable, and yet it is false: the very contrary is true. Constantine did, I believe, expect, that the establishment of the christian religion in the empire would have this effect. But his expectation proved vain: and I might appeal to the ecclesiastical and civil history of the last fourteen hundred years, that is, from his days to ours, to vouch for me. The whole tenour of them proves, that revolts against government, and disorders of every kind, have been at least as frequent in the christian world as in the pagan. There were never more, nor more unjust, nor more cruel wars than christians have waged, and the persecutions and massacres, that may be reproached to them are such, in all circumstances of inhumanity, as can be reproached to no other people except the Jews. That any part of these evils ought to be ascribed to gospel christianity, I neither say nor believe. They cannot be reconciled to the principles of it. But this I say, and believe, that the christian revelation has not effectually reformed the world. There never was in itself a more risible, nor in

it's consequences a more lamentable absurdity imposed on mankind than this, that a certain order of men should be instituted, not only to preside in the exercises of publick worship, and to exhort others to the practice of their known duties, but to think for the rest, and to dictate opinions to them on matters of nice speculation, concerning which they themselves were never agreed, and which have no immediate connection with these known duties. This absurdity, however, has prevailed in the christian, as in other religions of positive institution; and in this, as in them, the spirit of the clergy has become the spirit of the religion. They, who should have preached concord, have preached discord; and they, who should have promoted peace, have animated to war. They have given continual pretence to ferocity and cruelty; they have often irritated them above their usual excesses; and the profane application of a scrap of the Gospel * has served to deluge whole nations in blood. A private opinion, however true, that was not exactly conformable to an ecclesiastical decision, was termed heresy: and against such heresy, as against the greatest of crimes, the passions of men were inflamed, under the name of zeal.

Though I avoid to descend into particulars, let me just compare natural ferocity and cruelty with religious, by mentioning one example of the former, and two of the latter. The barbarous peo-

* Compel them to come in.

ple,

ple, who broke into the Roman empire, had no motives but those of plundering wealthy provinces, and settling in better climates. Religion was so far from being a motive to these enterprises, that they embraced generally that of the nations they conquered. They were guilty, no doubt, of great violence and cruelty; but when you read the most exaggerated accounts of their proceedings, read those which are contained in the Bible, of the invasion of Palestine, and those which Spanish authors themselves give of the invasion of America. These events, that happened at an immense distance of time, and were brought about under very different œconomies of religion and policy, are, therefore, the more proper to show how religion may furnish a pretence to natural ferocity and cruelty, as well as aggravate both; and that it has always done so, either by it's own spirit, as in the case of Judaism, or by that of it's teachers, as in the case of christianity. When the Israelites marched to the conquest of Canaan, the ark and the priests marched before them. An ancient promise, which God made to Abraham, when he made that covenant with him which was the foundation of their religion, was the foundation of the justice of that expedition; and the immediate commands of God were urged to authorise such extirpations of people, as no other history can parallel, as it is impossible to read without horrour, as were unnecessary to give them a secure possession of the country, and as neither this reason, nor any other, could excuse. When the

the Spaniards sailed to the conquest of America, silver and gold were their objects, but the propagation of the Gospel was their pretence. That wretch, pope Alexander the sixth, made them a donation of an entire hemisphere: and priests and monks were sent, that they might add the fury of bigotry to that of avarice.

I might rest the matter here, having said enough to show how false and trifling the argument is, which Clarke endeavours to draw from an incapacity in the heathen philosophers, both for want of knowledge, which was not, and for want of other means, which was their case, to reform mankind, and from the assumed sufficiency of revelation alone to produce this effect. But I choose to wind up the whole, by desiring you to retrace in your mind the progress made in sociability, civility, and every moral virtue, in the heathen republicks of Greece and Rome, before and since the christian revelation. Authors may declaim as much as they please, to aggravate particular vices, and to take off from the lustre of particular virtues; they will persuade no man, who reads and judges for himself, that the practice of piety and virtue has increased among the Greeks, from the time of Constantine downward, under the influence of christian pastors; as it did, under the influence of heathen philosophers and legislators; from the time when Thucydides represents them like lawless savages, who went pirating and ravishing about, to the days when Athens and Sparta flourished. As little will the

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same authors persuade, that the distance in virtue between that rout of shepherds and outlaws, who formed a state under Romulus, and the citizens of Rome in the best ages of that commonwealth, was not vastly greater than any improvement of the same kind that was made among them, from the time that Rome became christian.

If it appears now to be true, in fact, that neither reason nor revelation, neither heathen nor christian philosophers, neither human nor divine laws, have been able to reform the manners of men effectually; may we not, nay must we not conclude, that such a reformation is inconsistent with the original constitution of the human system? Must we not conclude, that appetites, passions, and the immediate objects of pleasure, will be always of greater force to determine men than reason, and the more remote object as well as complicated notion of happiness? Such is the imperfect state in which we are placed; a state wherein the vice and virtue of our moral, like the good and evil of our physical world, prevail in their turns, and are often, at the best, and in the most favourable circumstances, but equally balanced on the whole. Why there is such a state as this, and how to reconcile it to the ideas of holiness and goodness, let those men inquire, who say that God appeals to man, who take him at his word, and presume to judge him accordingly. But let you and I pronounce; that since there is such a state as this in the universal system, it was fit and right that there should be such a state.

On this head we may, we ought to be dogmatical.

XXXIV.

WHAT has been here laid down is so far from making natural, or revealed religion, or any means that tend to the reformation of mankind, unnecessary, that it makes them all more necessary. Since our state is so imperfect, since it is so hard to keep the virtues that are intimately connected with the happiness, and the vices that are intimately connected with the misery of mankind, even on a balance, nothing should be neglected that may give the advantage to the former, by enforcing moral obligations and all the doctrines of natural religion. As nothing should be neglected, so nothing may seem in speculation so proper to this purpose as a true revelation, or a revelation believed to be true: and if experience has not confirmed speculation in the case of a revelation we believe to be true, if christianity, which has enforced natural religion in some respects, has corrupted it in others, the maxim may still remain unshook. The natural, the genuine, effect of the Gospel has been defeated and perverted, and much has been done toward lessening the authority of it, by the manner in which it has been propagated.

If it had been propagated with the same simplicity and plainness, with which it was taught originally, by the Author of it, natural religion would

would have been enforced, and could not have been corrupted by christianity; but a voluminous and intricate system of artificial theology was grafted on it, both which observations have been made already, and must be often repeated, for the honour of the Gospel. This system was framed soon by habits contracted in the schools of Judaism and Paganism. In the first, their second or oral law, that is their traditions were taught: and what this science was may be seen in the collection of them made a century and a half after Christ, by one of their Rabbins*; the small obligation of being acquainted with which we ignorant persons owe to the labours of several great schools. What the science taught in the others was, we know from the remains of Pythagorean doctrines, and from the writings of Plato, that are come down to us, and that were in great vogue among the first teachers of christianity. Well might these men grow credulous in one, fantastical in the other, and superstitious in both. Such were they whom we call very properly fathers of the church, since they begot the dicipline, and much the greatest part of the doctrines of it. Easily imposed upon, and prone to impose, like the Jews, fond of mystery and of principles of knowledge laid beyond the bounds of all knowledge, like Pythagorick and Platonick metaphysicians, it is no wonder that they ran into theological obscurity with the light of the Gospel shining before them. Accustomed to declaim ra-

* Judah Hakkadosh, or the Holy.

ther than reason, and to employ figurative style even on subjects that require the most exact determination of ideas and precision of terms, like the rhetors of Greece and Rome, accustomed to advance intrepidly whatever served to the present purpose, without any regard to truth, like the sophists of those ages, which practice St. Jerom * defended and imputed to St. Peter and St. Paul, it is no wonder that they opposed sometimes errour to errour, and very often jargon to jargon.

Such science as this, and such habits as these, produced infinite absurdities, grounded on precarious tradition and false reasoning, with which I shall meddle in this place no further than the subject before me requires. To seek the will of God, and the duty of man, in the constitution of the world, and of the human nature, wherein they are most evidently revealed, would have been deemed too low a manner of philosophising for these men to take, who pretended to gifts of the spirit, while that opinion was rife among the first christians; and when it was so no longer, their successors had a resource, that served them almost as well. They sought the will of God, and the duty of man, in their own comments and paraphrases of Scripture, in the abstract reason of things, and in the eternal ideas, where Socrates and Plato had sent men to find whatever is unknown on Earth, as Ariosto sends them to the Moon to find whatever is lost on Earth. They

* Vid. Comm. in Ep. ad Gal. C 2.

deduced

deduced moral obligations from the divine attributes, of which they might think themselves more competent judges than others, because they thought themselves better informed by the Jews of his manner of government, and by christian tradition, if I dare to say so, of his private life and conversation.

These methods of framing and defending a system of religion were very convenient. They were in the hands of the fathers, what the cabala was in those of the rabbins. If they did not make an oral, they made a second law, necessary like the other in pretence to the perfection and to the intelligence of the first; and that gathered as it rolled on, till it became as voluminous, and, by dint of explanation and commentary, as abstruse. Among other recommendations, insisted on by Clarke, of these methods of reasoning, from the divine attributes, and the eternal reason of things, to the moral obligations, under which we were laid by the will of God, whereof I speak particularly here, and to the designs of God in creating the world and man, as well as to the conduct of his providence, in the government of the whole, whereof I shall speak hereafter, the universality of them is one. Now it is this universality which aggravates the assumption of mankind, which sets the danger of these methods of reasoning in a stronger light, and which proves invincibly against him, that they are far from being what he asserts they are, the best, clearest, and certainest, that philosophy affords. When we deduce the will of

God, and the duty of man, from the constitution of the world, and of the human nature, we deduce them from real knowledge; and we may have the certainty of this knowledge, through all the parts of natural religion, if we never lose sight of the first principles of it. That men lose this certainty, both philosophers and others, both they who reason "à priori," and sometimes they who reason "à posteriori," is true. The vast variety of opinions concerning the morality and immorality of actions, and the number of contradictory laws, that have been all made with the same design, to promote the practice of natural religion, show it to be so. But the difference lies here. Though neither of these methods can secure men absolutely from errour in forming general maxims, and much less in the particular applications even of such of these as are true, yet they have in one case a sure criterion, and in the other none at all. The reasoner "à posteriori" may at all times go back to those principles of knowledge, from which he set out, and which he will find always the same, retrace his own reasonings, and rectify his mistakes. But whither shall the reasoner "à "priori" go? Shall he go back to the abstract reason of things, and to the moral attributes of the Deity, from which he set out? But in them, as often as he has recourse to them, he will find no such criterion. The notions of other men will differ from his, and his first principles of his boasted knowledge, for want of such a criterion, will be founded in probability at best. It required

no

no such metaphysical apparatus, as Clarke employs somewhat tediously, to prove that all perfections, natural and moral, must be attributes of the Self-existent, All-perfect Author of all being; but he does not prove what he asserts, and on the proof of which his whole arguments turns, that these attributes are the same in God, as they are in our ideas*. He says, indeed, that he has proved it: and if we do not accept his proofs, he leaves us to recur to downright atheism; nay, he threatens to force us into it. Happily he has not been able to do the mischief he meditated Many a man believes in God, who does not believe in him. Many a man discerns, in their fullest light, the evidences of natural religion, and gives their due weight to those of revealed religion, without taking assumptions for demonstrations, and a chain of the former, which have an imaginary connection only, for a chain of the latter, rising out of one another, and closely connected together.

I have enlarged the rather on this head, because the example of this modern divine is extremely proper to give us an image of the ancient divines, who raised the theological system. Few of them reasoned so well even as he, but they set the manner which he and the rest of their successors have followed: a manner which may serve, as did formerly, and as it does still, in some degree, to realise, in appearance, the whimsies of every overheated brain, and to maintain indeterminable dis-

* Evid. P. 33, 34, et alibi.

putes: a manner, which proving almost every thing, proves almost nothing; and which, if it can be of any use, can be so only under the control of the other method. It can be only of subordinate use. It may illustrate. It never can, it never did decide: and the disputes it raised, in the early ages of christianity, may be well called indeterminable, since they are not yet determined. I have good reason to say, though I cannot say it on my own knowledge, that some of them were not determined in Clarke's own mind, though he has pronounced dogmatically about them in his writings.

When I say, that the method of reasoning "à priori," from the eternal reason of things, and from the divine attributes, may be of some subordinate use under the control of the other; I mean, that although our moral obligations arise from our moral system, that is from the works of God, and the additional motives to observe them from the Word of God alone, yet arguments deduced in this method, and expressly authorised by neither, may serve to warm the imagination, to move the affections, and by a sort of pious fraud to enforce natural religion. A lively declamation, unsupported by reason, and even by Gospel revelation, concerning the whole scheme, order, and state of things, from the orginal design of God in the creation of man, to his fall, and from thence to his redemption; a pathetical exhortation to imitate God, in the exercise of his glorious attributes, in those perfections which are the foundation of his own unchangeable

unchangeable happiness, in which we are able to imitate him, and in which he desires, that we should imitate him, because he has an infinitely tender and heartier concern for us, than any earthly father has for his posterity, to speak the language of Dr. Clarke; such declamations and such exhortations, I say, may have a great and a good effect, especially when they flow from an eloquent mouth, and from the pulpit. The man, who is convinced by his reflections on human nature, and the nature of society, for instance, that benevolence, and justice, and truth are the duties of natural religion, on the practice of which his happiness, and that of his whole kind depend, will not be further convinced, but he may be more moved, and his passions may be wrought up to second his judgment.

If the fathers of the church, and modern divines, had made no other use of this method of reasoning, than to strengthen a sense of our moral obligations, and to raise in the minds of men a greater veneration for the Scriptures, after they had proved the authenticity of them by eternal proofs, it had been well both for natural and revealed religion. But they have made a very different use of it. They have shook the former down to it's very foundation, and, under pretence of explaining and defending the other, they have laid it more open to the attack of unbelievers. Reason is sober and modest. She never affects to lead men beyond her bounds, but delivers them over to revelation. There is, and there needs must be, something

something marvellous in revelation. This marvellous dazzles and often blinds; so that they who pursue it too far slide easily into the whimsies of their own imaginations. Truth warms their brains; errour, that passes for it, turns them. Thus christianity became fanaticism, even in the first professors of it. Thus artificial theology grew up as fast as men began to teach the doctrine of Christ, like a revelation made so obscurely and imperfectly, that they who were to publish it were to explain it, and not only to explain it, but to supply the deficiencies of it; and some will be apt to think, that the first of these men was Paul. Divines would be furious to hear such language held as I hold to you. But they would be under great difficulties to evade the charge, and, therefore, the more furious; since I could easily produce passages out of the most renowned of the fathers, and out of their own writings, as extravagant as any in the Talmud, as absurd as any in the Koran, and quite fit to hold their places in one of Borri's letters: and since the whole ecclesiastical history is a history of the intolerance and violence of christians to one another, on such points as these, from the time they had it in their power to be intolerant and to persecute. You will not expect a beadroll of these doctrines and disputes. It will be sufficient to show how they had the effects that have been mentioned, both in natural and revealed religion.

XXXV.

CLARKE observes, that there is now no such thing as a consistent scheme of theism. A complete one, such a one as presumes to account for the whole order and state of things relative to God and man, I believe there is not. But how does the learned writer make out his proposition? That of the best heathen philosophers, which alone was such, ceases now to be so, he says, after the appearance of revelation; because it directly conducts men to the belief of christianity. If he intends the Socratical and Platonick scheme, and he can intend no other, what he advances is untrue; unless it be true, that a scheme which appears sometimes dogmatical and sometimes sceptical, that favours monotheism and polytheism in the same breath, as it were, may be consistent. If this scheme led to christianity in any sort, as I think it did, this was due not to the consistency, but the inconsistency of it. Several of it's doctrines were adopted into the articles of faith by christianity. Others were rejected. It happened accordingly. This adoption drew several of these philosophers into christianity: and this rejection made several averse to it. Justin died to maintain it. Porphyry would have died to oppose it. That Platonism was a consistent scheme, or that it conducted men directly to christianity, is not true therefore. But it is very

true,

true, that the method of reasoning à priori, from Heaven, if I may say so, that we do not know, to Earth, instead of reasoning from Earth, that we do know, to Heaven, was introduced into christianity with doctrines which the same method had broached in paganism; that this method continued to be in common that of those who embraced the christian profession, and of those who opposed it; and that it propagated fanaticism alike in both, as every man who compares, for instance, St. Austin and Plotinus together with indifference, which every man should do in such a case, must confess.

Christian fanaticism was more catching, and in that respect more dangerous than the other. Some of the heathen saints pretended to ravishments, to extasies, to occasional unions with the Supreme Intelligence, and to revelation. But those of christianity had, beside all these advantages, the Word of God himself to produce against unbelievers, and they hauled this word so well to their purposes (the expression is St. Jerom's*), that every side appealed to it in the disputes they had with one another. The consequence was, that every side damned all the rest, and, which was really worse, persecuted them in this world. The heathens exercised great violence against one another in their quarrels about their secular interests; but religion neither caused nor fomented them: whereas the quarrels of this kind

* Trahere Scripturas.

were

were the most frequent and the most inveterate among christians. They broke not only the bonds of alliance between nations, but those of kindred in families, and those of friendship where it was the most intimate. Such quarrels turned frequently on metaphysical speculations, which no side understood, or on rites and ceremonies of no importance to religion. These were the objects that engrossed, with those of ecclesiastical power and wealth, the whole attention of the church, and, under her influence, almost the whole attention of the state, as it appears by the behaviour of the Roman emperors after Constantine, some of whom seemed to have no other concern in the greatest distress of that empire, and in the very moment of it's fall. Nay, there is mention made of one, who had a scruple of conscience about the time he spent in secular affairs, and the government of his people. Thus reformation of manners was the concern of no body: and while the utmost dissolution of them was practised and indulged by the clergy, men were persecuted, at their instigation, for the least supposed errour in forms of speech, or in forms of worship; and injustice and murder were made duties of religion on this account. Is there not sufficient reason now to assert, that natural religion has been corrupted, and shook to the foundations of it, by artificial theology?

Sociability is the great instinct, and benevolence the great law of human nature, which no other law can repeal or alter: and yet when men have accustomed

customed themselves to think of the Supreme Being as of a human legislator and governor, and to ascribe to the All-perfect Being the same ideas, the same sentiments, affections, and passions, that they perceive in themselves; they may easily come to imagine, or to make others imagine him as intent to preserve the outward forms of his court, as the most essential laws of his government; and themselves as much bound at least to be good courtiers as good subjects. They may think themselves surest to please in the first of these characters. On a confidence in the merit of it, they may not only neglect the duties of the other, but they may sacrifice, to a false notion of honouring the prince, the fundamental laws, and the constitution of his government. They may think, or they may represent themselves to be his favourites, and they may treat even his best subjects as rebels, by virtue of laws which his ministers make, and which he is supposed to authorise.

This allusion to the abuses of civil government, in the kingdoms of earthly monarchs, gives a true image of those, which have always prevailed in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, to the subversion of it's original constitution: and with this allusion I shall finish this head.

XXXVI.

But I have undertaken to show further, that artificial theology, which has shaken the foundations

tions of natural religion, has laid revealed religion much more open to the attacks of unbelievers, by explanations and defences, than it would have been, if it had been left to stand without them on the proper proofs of this fact singly; it is a divine revelation. Now, to illustrate this point, let us suppose a theist objecting to some modest reasoner à posteriori, who is firmly persuaded of the authenticity of the Scriptures, that they contain many things repugnant to the justice and goodness of God, and unworthy of his majesty, his wisdom, and power. The believer might reply, that he knows the difference between knowledge produced by the certainty of demonstration, and that assurance which the highest degree of probability may produce; that an assurance, founded on any less degree of probability would not be sufficient in this case; but that assurance, founded on probability, is the utmost which can be had in all cases of this kind, and, therefore, that he thinks himself obliged to receive these books for the Word of God, though he cannot reconcile every thing, that they contain, to his ideas of the attributes of an infinite All-perfect Being. He might add, that he sees and feels many things in the constitution of the physical and moral world, and in the conduct of Providence, which it is not easy to reconcile to the same attributes; and yet that he knows, with all the certainty of demonstration, that the former are the works, and the latter the acts of God. He might add, that revelation may be necessary to illuminate reason in matters of religion, because

because there is a more immediate correspondence in matters of religion between God and man; but that reason cannot explain revelation, nor much less enforce it; that nothing less than another revelation can do either, and that in the mean time it is the duty of man to submit to believe what he does, and to adore what he does not understand. This the reasoner à posteriori might reply, with great plausibility at least. But the reasoner à priori could have no right to use the same language. A theist would retort his own doctrine against him in this manner. "You "argue, and you pretend to demonstrate, on your "ideas of justice and goodness, as well as of wis- "dom and power, and by the reason of things, "even when your arguments and your supposed "demonstrations conclude against the constitu- "tion and government of the world, which you "and I both acknowledge to be from God. With "what face then can you object to me, that I "reason upon the same ideas, and by the same "rule, concerning this Book, which you acknow- "ledge, and I do not, to be the Word of God? "Must I respect probability more than you re- "spect certainty, and a probability which is either "not established, or is established by halves? "It is not established, if the Book contains any "thing which implies an absolute contradiction "with any conceivable perfection even of the "human nature. It is established by halves, "whatever external proofs you may bring, unless "you can show, that the things contained in it,

"which

" which seem repugnant to all our ideas of a per-
" fect nature, are really consistent with them:
" which must be shown, not by a precarious beg-
" ging of the question, but by direct and evident
" proofs." What now must the reasoner à priori do? He must give up the cause to the theist, or he must submit to the task which the reasoner à posteriori evaded, by crying out from the first " O altitudo!" and by declining to examine any objections to matters contained in the Scriptures: in short, he puts himself under a necessity of showing*, that all these matters are exactly consonant to the dictates of sound reason, or the unprejudiced light of nature, and most wisely perfective of it†; and that all the doctrines . . . . necessary to salvation, or closely connected with such as are so, are apparently most agreeable to reason, though not discoverable by it.

This task has been undertaken accordingly by every divine, sanguinely and dogmatically by most, weakly by all of them. One of your acquaintance and mine‡ has distinguished himself, in all these respects, by writing on the subject, as he would have preached to an Irish congregation. But that such a man as Clarke should write upon it at all, and have nothing better to say than what he has said, may serve to show how these men are led, by their manner of reasoning, and by their artificial theology, to disarm christianity of her best defence, by taking her out of her strong hold

* Evid. p. 289. † Ib. 244. ‡ Dr. Delany.

of revelation, and by trusting to those feeble entrenchments, which they are able to cast up; for even those, which Clarke cast up, are feeble beyond belief. I am not answering his book, and shall therefore do no more than make a transient mention of some particulars: but I am willing to rest the truth of what I have advanced, even on this transient mention.

The doctor is to prove it agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason, to believe, that the Supreme Being did generate a divine person or emanation from himself, and he proves it by asserting, that this doctrine contains no manner of absurdity nor contradiction in it. This was more easily asserted than proved, some persons would say. But besides, is it agreeable to reason to believe a proposition true, merely because it does not manifestly imply contradiction? Is every thing, that is possible, probable: or is it reasonable to believe, on the probability that a revelation is a true revelation, any thing that may be possibly not inconsistent with the perfections of the divine nature, but that seems to be so in probable opinion? It is said, that the wisest and most learned of the ancient philosophers received and taught some doctrines . . . . . as difficult to comprehend, as any thing in this article of the christian faith, and that these men would not have made any objection to it on this account. Agreed. How then does the argument stand? Reduce it to it's just value, and it stands thus. The heathen philosophers taught many doctrines as incomprehensible

as

as this, without any pretence of a divine authority; and their own wild hypotheses would have conducted them readily to receive this, on the authority of a revelation: it is, therefore, agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason, that we, who know how fantastical their whole theology was, should follow the example, which it is assumed they would have set us, and believe, without any of their prejudices, what they might have been induced, by these very prejudices, to believe. This doctrine of the logos or nous was taught in some of the Egyptian and other schools of eastern divinity; and we are not to wonder if Plato, who had it from them, spoke obscurely, or understood little concerning it, since it is not discoverable by bare reason. But I think that Plato would have been more willing than Arius, or Clarke himself, to subscribe to the Athanasian Creed. He would have assented, perhaps, as much as he assented in other cases, to a coevality of the Son with the Father, as the eternal effect of an eternal cause. But he would not have assented to their coequality. He assumed that the Son and the Spirit are distinct subordinate beings, and no more coequal with the one Supreme Being, in the order of nature, than the world was thought to be by Aristotle, and the philosophers, who maintained the eternity of it.

Archbishop Tillotson's challenge to the Socinians it is not to my purpose to examine; and I need say nothing of the Holy Spirit, since all that Clarke says is, that the same which is said of the

second may be understood, very agreeably to right reason, and with little variation, of the third.

That the account the Bible gives of a paradisaical state, of the loss of it by sin, and of the consequences of this loss, are exactly consonant to the dictates of sound reason*, or the unprejudiced light of nature, and most wisely perfective of it (for thus far his undertaking goes) it behoved him to make out very clearly; because if the redemption be, as he owns it is†, the main and fundamental article of the christian faith, sure I am, that the account of the fall of man is the foundation of this fundamental article. He should have laboured this point the rather, since it is, in all it's consequences, absolutely irreconcilable to every idea we can frame of wisdom, justice, and goodness, to say nothing of the dignity of the Supreme Being, who is introduced so familiarly, and employed so indecently, in taking the cool air, in making coats of skins, to serve instead of aprons of fig leaves, which Adam and Eve had sewed together, and not only in cursing the serpent, and them, and their whole posterity, and the world itself for their sakes, but in joking most cruelly on them; for the twenty-second verse of the third chapter of Genesis is allowed to be an irony or sarcasm, by that learned divine, Mathew Poole. Instead of proving any part of this to be agreeable to sound reason, and the unprejudiced light of nature, Clarke passes over the

* Evid. p. 239. † Ib. p. 262.

whole,

whole, as very reasonable and credible in itself, which it appears to be, he says, not only from the abstract consideration of the nature of the thing*, but also from the general opinion of the heathens, that the original state of man was innocent and simple, till God, for the sins of men, changed this happy constitution of things. In the name of God, is this to prove? Do men, who prove no better, deserve an answer, how much reputation soever they may have acquired? Their adversaries deny, and have attempted to show, that this account of the fall of man is unreasonable, and incredible, in every consideration, abstract or particular. This champion in demonstration says, it is very reasonable and credible from the abstract consideration of the thing. He says no more. He begs the question, shamefully, on the very point in dispute, and which he undertook to maintain. The heathen, the most ancient and learned of them, are again brought in to no purpose whatever; since, if they had all agreed in some general and obscure tradition of this sort, it would avail little, as to the reasonableness and credibility of this change in the constitution of things, and nothing as to the particular circumstances, which are made the angular stones of the whole fabrick of christianity. One cannot consider the use which Clarke makes, so frequently, and to so little purpose, of the heathen philosophers, without laughing, as Calanus, the doctor's voucher on this occasion, laughed at the dress of Onesicritus,

* Evid. p. 255.

when he bid him strip and lye down naked on the stones by him*. The mad gymnosophist had begun, while he laughed, to tell the messenger of Alexander, as a sample of his wisdom, how fertile the world was in ancient times, how the fountains ran with milk, with water, with honey, with wine, and with oil; how Jupiter had destroyed this constitution of things, for the iniquity of men, who abused his goodness †; and had obliged them to live by their labour; how it had been restored again on their reformation, and what danger there was, now they had relapsed into almost the same iniquity, that the end of all things should be at hand. He would have proceeded, no doubt, in much the same style, if Mandanis, the head of the order, had not imposed silence on him, and, calling Onesicritus to himself from Calanus, had not talked with great decency and good sense, in a manner, and on subjects proper for the Greek to report to his prince. Thus the history of the fall, and all the circumstances of it are proved reasonable and probable.

XXXVII.

Our author takes a little more pains to show, that the doctrine of the redemption of mankind is agreeable to reason. Having assumed, which he calls proving, that the moral attributes of God,

* Strabo, l. 15.

† . . . . ob satietatem et luxuriam ad contumeliam se transididerunt.

and

and the notions and expectations of some wise men among the heathens, make it reasonable to believe God did make, seventeen hundred years ago, a revelation of his will to mankind, as if mankind stood in more need of a revelation four thousand years after their race began, than at any other period; as if the moral attributes of God were not the same four thousand years before, when he made the first revelation of his will in the constitution of nature; and finally, as if the notions and expectations of Socrates and Plato, supposing these philosophers to have had them really, proved any thing more than their desire of more knowledge than God thought proper to give them the means of acquiring; having assumed all this, I say, he proceeds to argue in this manner*. Some sacrifice or expiation for sin was necessary to be appointed, "to show God's irreconcilable hatred to it. Repentance might not be sufficient. God would "not be appeased without some punishment and "satisfaction; and yet he would accept some "other than the destruction of offenders. This "appears, in the custom of sacrificing, to have "been the universal apprehension of mankind:" and, from this universal apprehension, he concludes, that "the doctrine of the redemption is "plainly agreeable to right reason." Thus are these great masters of reason reduced to propose the most gross abuses for the true dictates of it. Thus are the most absurd notions, which superstition

* Evid. p. 263, et sequ.

tion ever spread in contradiction to the law of nature and reason, applied to the proceedings of God with man; made the measure of divine justice by philosophers, who determine and define the moral attributes of the deity; and established as foundations of the Christian system, by divines, who pretend, and who are hired, to defend it. Notions which directed a principal part of idolatrous worship are sanctified, and the most inhuman rites are rendered the most meritorious; for if it was agreeable to sound reason, to think that God would not be appeased unless some blood was spilled, he who shed that of beasts to expiate sins did well, but he who shed that of his children did better. He brought the punishment nearer to himself: and the Phœnician had the advantage, in this respect, of the Israelite. He erred, whatever he sacrificed, by the misapplication of a true principle, when he sacrificed to Moloch. But the Israelite, who did not misapply the principle, would have pursued it more agreeably to sound reason, and the unprejudiced light of nature, if he had sacrificed his son, as Abraham was ready to do, or his daughter, like Jephthah. God was pleased to accept of an expiation that cost offenders less to make, under the Mosaical dispensation, as the Scriptures tell us. But the same Scriptures prove evidently, that the reason of the thing goes as far as I carry it; since, under the christian dispensation, God caused the expiation for sin to be made by the sufferings and death of his own Son; than which nothing can be

be imagined, as Clarke * assures us, more honourable and worthy of the Supreme Lord and Governor of all things.

We weigh these matters in the balance of human reason, to which the appeal is made, if men who decide can be said to appeal, even though they affirm that God condescends to do so. They are refuted, therefore, if they have not reason, as well as revelation, on their side: and the charge of weakening the cause of the latter, while they presume to defend it by the former, is made out against them. Let us proceed, with a due respect for revelation, and with no more than it deserves for their reasoning.

I say then, though we allow men were in the right to think universally that God exacted some bloody expiation for sin, and that repentance, which the law of nature points out, was not sufficient; yet even this concession would not justify the doctrine of the redemption of mankind at the bar of reason. The heathens thought, that the sacrifice of an ox, or a son, or a daughter, would atone for sins. Therefore, it is plainly agreeable to the universal reason of mankind, signified by this universal apprehension, to believe, that God sent his only begotten Son, who had not offended him, to be sacrificed by men, who had offended him, that he might expiate their sins, and satisfy his own anger. Surely our ideas of moral attributes will lead us to think, that God

* Evid. p. 268.

would

would have been satisfied, more agreeably to his mercy and goodness, without any expiation, upon the repentance of the offenders; and more agreeably to his justice, with any other expiation rather than with this. The heathen divines were accustomed to think and speak of their gods much after the manner of men. If one of them, therefore, had arisen from the dead, he would have concurred readily with Clarke in the maxim, that the moral attributes are the same in the divine nature as they are in our ideas. But then, he would have challenged the doctor to produce an example, in the pagan system, of a god sacrificing his son to appease himself, any more than of a god who was himself his own father and his own son. Saturn, he might say, did indeed offer up his son in sacrifice: but he did it to appease Coelus, not himself.

When our divine is about to establish, "that "there is a fitness and unfitness of certain "circumstances to certain persons, founded in "the nature of things, and in the qualifications "of persons; he says, that this must be ac- "knowledged by every one who will not affirm, "that it is equally fit . . . . that an innocent "being should be extremely and eternally mi- "serable, as that it should be free from such "misery." The proposition is true without dispute, though it is not true that we can always discern this fitness and unfitness. Let us join issue with the learned person here, and add, to strengthen the maxim, that there is the same unfitness, in the case supposed, whether the misery

sery be assumed eternal, or not. Let us ask now, whether the truth of this maxim, the innocence of the Lamb of God, and the sufferings and ignominious death of Christ, can be reconciled together, and how? The nicest casuist would, I think, be puzzled; but our casuist goes on most dogmatically, and shows no more regard to the dignity than to the innocence of the Divine Person who died on the cross. He does, indeed, allow, that no one can certainly say, that God might not have pardoned sin, upon repentance, without any sacrifice. But he pronounces this method of doing it, by the death of Christ, to be more wise and fit, for several prudential reasons. Read them, they would appear futile and impertinent, if applied to human councils: but in their application to the divine councils they become profane and impious. Nay, it would not be hard to show, that this method was more proper to produce a contrary effect, than that which is assigned as a reason for taking it. For instance, the death of Christ, it is said, was proper to discountenance presumption, and to discourage men from repeating their transgressions. Surely it would not be hard to show by reason, that the death of Christ might, and by fact, that it has countenanced presumption, without discouraging men from repeating their transgressions. But I shall not descend into particulars that are trifling and tedious, and that would render a full answer to them little better. A general reflection, or two, may serve, and are as much as they all deserve.

Though

Though I am far from approving the practice of those who compare so frequently the divine with the human œconomy and policy, and who build on the last their hypothetical schemes of the first; yet, on this occasion, and to frame an argument ad hominem, it may be properly done. Let us suppose then, a great prince governing a wicked and rebellious people. He has it in his power to punish, he thinks fit to pardon them. But he orders his only beloved son to be put to death, to expiate their sins, and to satisfy his royal vengeance. Would this proceeding appear to the eye of reason, and in the unprejudiced light of nature, wise, or just, or good? No man dares to say that it would, except he be a divine, for Clark does in effect say that it would; since he imputes this very proceeding to God, and justifies it not implicitly on the authority of revelation, but explicitly on the authority of reason, which may be applied to man as well as to God, and as a particular instance of the general rule, that is, according to him, common to both. Allow me one reflection more.

Clarke acknowledges readily, that human reason could never have discovered such a method as this for the reconciliation of sinners to an offended God. But if reason could not have discovered it, how comes it to pass, that reason finds no such difficulty nor inconceivableness in it, as to make a wise man call the truth of it in question? the truth of a well attested revelation, he says.

But

But here he plays the sophist. He is to prove the method agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason, independently of revelation. No matter how it came to be known, is it reasonable, is it agreeable to a fitness, founded in the nature of things, and in the qualifications of persons? That is the point to be considered. To consider it as reasonable relatively to the revelation of it, is not to appeal to unprejudiced, but to prejudiced reason. It is, in plain terms, to beg the question shamefully. Heathen theology was licentious enough in all conscience. The professors of it gave an extravagant loose to their imaginations, passed all the bounds of probability, and scarce kept within those of conceivable possibility. Thus they came very near to such a system as this: so near, that there was little more to be added; but this little they did not think so highly of the human, and so lowly of the divine nature, as was necessary to make them add. Æsculapius came down from Heaven, conversed in a visible form with men, and taught them the art of healing diseases*. The passage is cited from Julian by Clarke, in order to show, according to his laudable custom, that there is nothing in the christian system which we may not believe on grounds of reason; because there is nothing in it more incredible than what the least reasonable men that ever were, wild metaphysicians, heathens, hereticks, apostates, have believed. It may be cited

* Evid. p. 268.

more

more properly to show, what I mean to show by it, how easy and short a transition might have been made by heathen divines, in the rage that possessed them all of framing complete schemes of the whole order and state of things, from a god teaching physick to a god teaching theology. The most ignorant and savage of them, like the Phœnicians and the Carthaginians, who have been already mentioned, for they were all superstitious alike, came a little nearer to the doctrine of redemption. But even they did not come up to it entirely. They meaned to encourage the pious practice of sacrificing their children; for pious it was on the principle of expiation by shedding of blood: but there was a great difference between the conceptions they had of their gods, and those which christians have of the Father and the Son. Their gods had been men, and Saturn was a man when he sacrificed his son. Their ideas of human government led them to notions of divine mediations, and of expiations by shedding of blood, which were so many particular redemptions. But nothing in the reason of the thing, nor in the most superstitious of their prejudices, could lead them to imagine so much rigour in one god, as to exact that another should be sacrificed even by men who meaned no expiation, and in whom it was a murder, not a sacrifice; nor so much humility and condescension in another, as to make him submit to be this divine victim. They could not imagine any thing so repugnant as this to all their ideas of order, of justice, of goodness, and in

in short, of theism; though they imagined many other things that were really inconsistent with all these ideas. Those of them, therefore, who embraced this doctrine, after it had been revealed, embraced it, not because they found no difficulty nor inconceivableness in it, which Clarke was to prove, by proving it agreeable to sound reason, but merely because it was a part of a relation they believed true, for reasons of another kind; which is nothing to his purpose under this head of argument.

XXXVIII.

All that he says more than I have observed upon it; all that follows about the importance of this world of ours, which it is assumed was made for the sake of man, and which, we are told, is as considerable and worthy of the divine care as most other parts of our system, which is likewise as considerable as any other single system in the universe, in order to take off the objection arising from the meanness of the creature; and finally, all that follows about the manifestations of God, and the discoveries of his will, supposed to have been made by the same divine Logos to other beings in other systems, in order to take off the imputation of partiality from the Creator: all this, I say, is a rhapsody of presumptuous reasoning, of profane absurdities disguised by epithets, of evasions that seem to answer, while they only perplex, and in one word, of the most arbitrary

trary and least reasonable suppositions. I will bring but one instance more of the excellent manner in which the author of the Evidences proves, that all things necessary to be believed in order to salvation, or closely connected with these, are most agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason. He proposes * the objection drawn from the want of universality to the christian revelation. He had proposed it before out of the oracles of reason, and his answer in both places is the same. It had been urged, that no revelations, no instituted religions, had been universally received at any time, and by all nations; and that christianity is in the same case with the rest: that the Son of God did not appear, till the latter ages of the world; and that since he did appear, his Gospel has not been received universally, and even his appearance has not been known to a great number of nations. The Doctor does not undertake to show how men may receive the benefits of a revelation of which they never heard, though that seems to be his opinion. But he insists triumphantly, that the same objection will lie against natural religion, and boasts again, that he can force the objector into absolute atheism. He boasts, like a bully who looks fierce, speaks big, and is little to be feared; for there is no sufficient parity between the two cases, and his reason is, on this occasion, as harmless as the other's sword. To affirm, that natural and revealed religion are alike

* Evid. p. 215, 216, 217, et 273.

unknown

unknown in any parts of the world, is to affirm an untruth. That all men have not the same capacities and opportunities of understanding the obligations of natural religion, is true, but proves nothing.

Go to any of those people whom we call barbarous, and who seem of all human creatures to have improved their reason the least, you will find the light of nature, though not the light of the Gospel, shining faintly indeed, but shining among them; some rules of moral life, some laws for the maintenance of society, some awe and reverence of a Being superior to man, some reward for virtue, some punishment for vice. The religion of nature is known and improved more or less according to the different opportunities which men have, in proportion to their different capacities, and perhaps to the different degrees in which they participate of one common nature. But it is known and observed more or less every where. Nay, there has been often occasion to wish, that the same moderation and innocence, which prevailed in ignorant nations, had been found in those, who are more improved in learning and civility; and that the knowledge of virtue had been of greater advantage to natural religion than the ignorance of vice*.

* . . . . Utinam reliquis mortalibus similis moderatio et abstinentia alieni foret. Tantum plus in illis proficit vitiorum ignoratio, quam in his (nempe Græcis) cognitio virtutis. Justin Lib. 2, C. 2. speaking of the Scythians.

Is this now the case of the christian religion? How many nations, civilised as well as barbarous, have there been, how many are there still, by whom these tidings of good news have been never heard, nor even the least rumour of them! How many others to whom they have been carried, and who have refused to hear them, or hearing to believe them! All the truths of natural religion are discoverable, it is allowed on all hands, by the due use of reason alone; and God has left them to be so discovered: for though he has not given the same capacity to all men in any case, he has given the same means to all men in this case. If natural religion is discoverable by all men, revealed religion is so by none: and the divine must have very little regard to consistency, when he objects, that God has not given to some the same capacity of making and improving this discovery, as he has given to others: since it is his own doctrine, that in those countries where christianity has been preached, some have believed and some have not believed, according to the different measures of grace, which is the free gift of God, bestowed upon them.

But to carry this matter beyond the power of sophism, and every polemical artifice; let us suppose whole nations as ignorant of natural religion as their bears and their wolves. Natural religion would be still the same and of the same authority. It would be the religion of reasonable nature, and obligatory on all who had such a nature. One part of Clarke's reasonings

sonings, which he supposes falsely to be alike applicable both to that and to the christian religion, would be well applied in favour of it. They who were endowed with rationality might say, with sound reason and the unprejudiced light of nature on their side, "God is not obliged to "make all his creatures, even all those that are "in appearance of the same species, equal: and "to assert, that he is, would be a profane dimi- "nution of his sovereignty. Let us be thankful "for the means he has given us, of improving "our knowledge and our happiness. That he "he has not given them to other creatures, would "be a strange reason for not improving them "ourselves." They, who were not endowed with so much rationality, would have no more obligations incumbent on them than their bears and their wolves. Is this plea now applicable to the want of universality, objected to the christian revelation? It cannot be said, without equal absurdity and effrontery. But they, to whom the terms of the christian religion were communicated, might say, with sound reason and the unprejudiced light of nature on their side; that these terms would have been communicated to all mankind alike, if the revelation had been from God; since all mankind were alike obliged to them, and since they, to whom these terms had not been communicated, would die, and might be damned in their involuntary ignorance of them. Thus their faith would be shocked, or if it was not, if they worked out their salvation with fear and trembling,

the fate of the others would continue to be, what they pronounced it, most undeservedly miserable.

This needs little explanation; but to prevent all cavil, and to show with greater evidence how inconsistently Clarke argues, and would argue, even if natural religion wanted universality, as much, and in as absolute a manner as he supposes, and as in fact the christian religion wants it, let us descend into a more particular comparison. In one case then, God would have placed his human creatures in very different circumstances, indeed; but the religion of reason obliges us to think, that his proceedings toward them would have been proportioned to these circumstances. In the other case, and according to the christian revelation, he has, for the sake of one man's offence, reduced all mankind to the same deplorable circumstances. It is true, that he sent his Son, forty centuries afterward, to redeem them from the consequences of this situation; but the condition was, that they believed in his Son; "for there is no name under Heaven by which "we can be saved but the name of the man "Christ Jesus." They are condemned without any fault of theirs: one sole and uniform condition of saving themselves is imposed on all of them, and the greatest part are deprived even of the knowledge of this condition. It will be said, perhaps, which has been hinted already, that as the death of Christ had a retroactive effect on those that lived and died before they were redeemed, so it may

may be beneficial to those who never heard of it since. But these are the hypotheses of theology, and surmises of divines, not the express and clear doctrines of christianity. Nay, the divines, who held so charitable an opinion, would be opposed by other divines. St. Thomas is pleased, notwithstanding this text, to save some of the heathens, by a distinction between implicit and explicit faith, and by assuming that the first might be a saving faith to those who lived before the promulgation of the Gospel. But he is not so gracious to those who have lived since that time. Since the Gospel was promulgated, nothing less than explicit faith will do: and he damns all those who have it not, whether they ever heard of Christ or no, most arbitrarily and most inconsistently. To conclude; there is no parity between the two cases. The first is agreeable to all our ideas of justice and goodness, as well as of sovereignty and order. But no subtilty whatever can reconcile the last to any ideas, except those of caprice, injustice, cruelty, and tyranny.

What shall we say now? Is the cause of christianity too bad to be defended? Or is it defended booty? I think neither. I have too much respect for revelation to think one, and too much charity for the least charitable men alive to think the other. A presumptuous habit of reasoning, and the frenzy of metaphysicks are to be charged alone. It would pass for downright madness, if we were not accustomed to it, and if the practice of great and good men did not authorise it in

common opinion, to hear a creature, placed in the lowest form of intelligent beings, undertake to penetrate the designs, to fathom the depths, and to unveil the mysteries of Infinite Wisdom, which the most exalted of created intelligencies would adore in silence. When the tradition was recent, and the proofs irrefragable of all the facts on which the authority of christian revelation is, and can be alone properly founded; the fathers of the church might have stopped the mouths of all pretenders to reason, by refusing to reason about a revelation already proved to be divine; by insisting, that every thing necessary to be known was clearly and fully revealed, and that mysteries were recorded to exercise our faith, not our speculations, nor our logick. If they had not gone off this rock, in compliance with the philosophical mode of the age, and with the vanity of their own hearts, they could not have been forced from it. But when they had once engaged in Platonick and Aristotelical reasonings about christian mysteries, it was too late to go back. They might cry as loudly as they pleased, which they always did when they were pinched, that the judgments and ways of God were acatalepta, incomprehensible; but this cry came with an ill grace from them. It could have no effect on their adversaries. They might have made it a cry of triumph. They made it little better than a confession of defeat: and such it has continued ever since.

XXXIX.

If I intended to proceed any further than Clarke leads me on this occasion, I might consider in many more instances, taken from the writings of other divines, and of the fathers of the church, the manner in which they employ reason to account for revelation, sometimes literally, sometimes allegorically, always presumptuously, often ridiculously. To collect all the profane nonsense that has been broached about Eve and the serpent, about the trees of life and knowledge, and about other circumstances of the creation and fall of man, which the curiosity of the woman, the wiles of the serpent, and the uxorious compliance of Adam effected, would be to collect an immense volume of all that has been writ on these subjects by Jews and Christians; for all that has been writ upon them is alike absurd. To run through all those passages of the Old Testament, which are lessons of publick and private immorality, of immodesty to women, and of sanguinary ferocity to men; which leave us no room to be surprised when we hear, that there were certain hereticks, who thought the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New, and which show that they who compiled the written law, from Esdras to Simon the Just, had as little discernment in the choice of their materials, as they who compiled the traditions

ditions of the oral law afterward; both of which demonstrate, that notions the most unworthy of God, and the most repugnant to the law of human nature, prevailed among the Jews in every age, though they were reconciled in their minds to some very sublime sentiments, and very true opinions: to run through all this, I say, would be not only tedious, but shocking to a man who considered these passages seriously, even to him, perhaps, who had heard them read solemnly a thousand times in his parish church without being offended at them. Such is the force of habit, which familiarises the grossest absurdities to our reason, as it does the most disagreeable sensations to our senses.

Types, and figures, and prophecies, are subjects on which the acute wits of divines have been much exercised, in order to show a connection between the Old Testament and the New, and how one prepares us for and foretells the other. I shall descend into few particulars concerning them. There is no room for reasoning about the two former. Their propriety or impropriety, aptness or unaptness, must appear to the understanding as soon as they are compared with the things typified or figured. Thus, for example, and to mention no other, when St. Austin * tells us, that the ark being

* Mensura ipsa longitudinis, altitudinis, latitudinisque ejus significat corpus humanum . . . quæ sit salva per lignum in quo pependit . . . . homo Jesus Christus. Prænunciatus est venturus, et venit. De Civ. Dei. L. 15.

made

made of wood, and having a length, a height, and breadth, which answer to the proportions of the human body, and, therefore signify a human body, it is plain that this vessel prefigured the city of God, or the church, which is saved by that wood, on which the man Jesus Christ was hanged up; that his coming was foretold, and he came; the impropriety and unaptness of this type or figure must strike you on the very first reflection.

More reasoning and a longer process of examination are necessary when prophecies are concerned. The meaning of them is always equivocal and obscure, and it may be doubtful sometimes whether things were done, or recorded to be done, because they had been, or seemed to have been foretold; or whether they had been foretold, because they were to come to pass. Of prophecies we have store, both of such as are applied to the Messiah, of such as foretold what was to happen immediately to him and to Jerusalem, and of such as remain, and must remain, till the consummation of all things, unaccomplished. I shall not set my feet into this labyrinth, where nothing certain is to be found, and from whence it is not easy to get out. I shall be content to observe, that many questions are unresolved, many difficulties unremoved, concerning the first kind of prophecies; and that men, even inspired men, have thought sometimes that they discovered prophecies, when they made them,

and

and made them such as could not be maintained, with all the learning and all the subtilty they have bestowed about them. It was for this reason, I suppose, that Clarke omitted modestly the famous prophecy, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a "son," in the place where he enumerates those that foretold the Messiah; though he was sanguine enough to insist on some of no less difficult application; as that "the sceptre shall not de- "part from Judah till Shiloh comes;" and on others that have had no accomplishment, as that in the Psalms, that God would "give him the "heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts "of the Earth for his possession," which is become by the event more applicable to Foë or Mohomet, than to the true Messiah.

It may not be out of our way to observe here, that as the vague undetermined sense, and the ambiguous dark expressions of the Bible have led sacred writers and others to suppose prophecies, applicable to Christ, where none such were intended; so the Mahometan doctors have taken this advantage to assume, that their false prophet is plainly promised, both in the old and new covenant. They quote the text in Deuteronomy, where it is said, that the Lord came, or manifested himself, from Sinai, and rose up from Seir*, that he shined forth from mount Paran. In this passage they find the law given to Moses,

* C. 33, v. 2.

the

the Gospel to Jesus Christ, and the Koran to Mahomet; and this they support by topographical proofs. Seir is, according to them, that extent of hills, which run from the Red to the Dead Sea, close to Jerusalem. Paran is that mountain in the desert of Arabia, near to Mecca, where Mahomet received the first chapters of his impertinent book. I wonder these commentators have not observed further, that from the Lord's right hand there went a fiery law for them. This epithet could never be more properly applied. Your Homer alludes to fire in his descriptions of battles. The devastations of war are compared by other poets to those of fire; and the Mahometan law might be called fiery at least, as well as the Mosaical. These doctors bring two other quotations from the Psalms. The first is in our translation, Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined *. In the Syriack they say, it is God hath made a crown of glory to shine out of Zion; and they add, that the words, rendered crown of glory, are in the original, Hilan Mahmudan, by which the passage would be made to signify, God has sent the domination of Mahomet with splendour out of Zion. The second is taken from the Psalm, which is called the Psalm of Solomon †, and which describes in the future tense all the glories of his reign. This our divines agree to be so; but having assumed, no one knows why,

* Ps. 50, v. 2. † Ps. 72.

that

that Solomon was a type of the Messiah, they assert, that the prophecy looks forward to the spiritual reign of Christ, and that sometimes one and sometimes the other is meaned, with a strange confusion of images. The Mahometan doctors fix the sense of it, by asserting, against Jews and Christians both, that the Arabick version employs the proper and usual word Medina, where it is said, that they of the city shall flourish like grass of the Earth: after which they ask, with an air of triumph, what other prophet, beside Mahomet, ever came out of Medina, or even of Arabia? They go further, and they assume, that Christ himself foretold the coming of Mahomet, when he said, that, if he did not go, the Paraclete would not come; but that when he did go, he would send him *. They pretend, that this passage was still more honourable for their prophet, that Christ spoke of himself in it as of the precursor of Mahomet, and that it has been corrupted. But still the prophecy, they say, is sufficiently clear, since Paraclet is in Arabick Ahmed, and since Ahmed or Mahammed are the same.

All that has been said concerning attempts to explain and enforce revelation by reason, relates to internal proofs, as they are called, of the divine original of the Scriptures. Clarke, whom I follow, does not think fit to insist on any external proofs, on such as might establish beyond all reasonable doubt the antiquity, the genuineness, and

* St. John 16, v. 12.

the

the authority of the books themselves *: and yet the least grain of such proof as this would outweigh all the volumes of problematical and futile reasoning, that has been so tediously employed to give some colour to the other. He refers us indeed to the collection that we find in Grotius† of many particulars contained in sacred, and confirmed by profane history. But Grotius and he should have seen, that every one else would see the fallacy of this pretended proof. The concurrent testimony of contemporary, disinterested, and unprejudiced authors is, no doubt, a principal foundation of the credibility of any history: and such a testimony these men would have it thought that they produce, when they quote, with much pomp, Egyptian, Phœnician, Chaldean, Indian, and Greek traditions and histories. But none of these were of such authority; or if the most ancient of them, such as Sanchoniathon for instance, and even others more modern, like Berosus, or Abydenus, or Eratosthenes, or Manetho, were disinterested and unprejudiced in their history and chronology; yet it is certain, that they, by whom alone these testimonies are conveyed to us, were so little of that character, Josephus and Eusebius for instance, that their design in writing, however they blundered sometimes in the execution of it, was to make profane chronology and history appear conformable to those of the Bible at any rate. That they did so, every

* Evid. p. 269. † De Verit Rel. Christ.

scholar

scholar knows in some instances, which makes their authority justly precarious in every instance of this kind. But I am willing to suppose, that these impure channels are pure, and that they have conveyed these anecdotes down to us just as they stood in the ancient books, from which they are said to be taken. What will this confession prove? It will prove, that there were various traditions, in a most remote antiquity, concerning the creation, the flood, and the destruction of Sodom, about Abraham and other patriarchs, about David and other kings of the Jews. It will show, that the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, the Israelites, and probably every one of the Eastern nations, had their systems of traditions, whereof that of the Old Testament alone is come down to us entire. The same names, and many circumstances of the same events, must, of course have been mentioned in all. But such a conformity proves nothing. As they agree in some, they might differ in other particulars: and the whole tenour of those that are lost might be repugnant to one another, and to that of the Jews. Abraham was a name famous in all of them. Isaac was known to the Arabians as well as Ismael, and Ismael to the Jews as well as Isaac; but they tell very different stories about the legitimacy, and rank, and favour with God of the two brothers, as well as about the descent from them. In one of these, we find a genealogy down to Christ. In the other the Mahometans find a genealogy of all those who were born with the signs of a prophet down to Mahomet.

Mahomet. I could set the fallacy of this sort of proof, in general and in particular, as it is applied both to the Old Testament and to the New, in a stronger light; if I did not hasten back from this digression, to that which is more immediately my subject, in order to show you a further abuse of this manner of reasoning, on which the absurd pile of artificial theology has been erected, and is supported. The abuse, I mean, is that whereby divines admit the first, the most plausible and the strongest objection that atheism ever made to the existence of God; form a sort of partial alliance with the professors of it, and assist them in undermining the fundamental article of all religion, which they hope vainly to maintain afterward by the help of a few hypothetical props. This abuse does not arise solely from the presumption which has been spoken of, the presumption of those who think, that the christian revelation wants to lean on human reason, and to be explained and enforced by it; but from a false reasoning, in which philosophers have indulged their pride, and their curiosity, ever since there was such a thing as philosophy in the world. Let us descend into a particular consideration of this matter, and speak of it a little at large.

XL.

After pleading the cause of natural and revealed religion, I am now to plead that of God himself,

himself, if I may use the expression of Seneca, in his treatise De Providentia, against divines and atheists in confederacy.

That chain of reasoning by which we arrive, from a knowledge of the phænomena, at a knowledge of the author of nature, of a first intelligent Cause of all things, selfexistent, and the fountain of all existence, all-perfect, and the immitable original of all perfections, has never been, and can never be broken. How should reason dissolve a demonstration reason has made, by leading us from things perceived by sense and by intuition to that existence which cannot be perceived *? The atheist cannot be said properly to argue against the most evident, and, in my apprehension, the most comfortable truth, which human reason demonstrates. All he can do is to cavil at it: and thus far the association, between him and the theist, has been carried too generally in all ages.

Ignorance that was real, and knowledge that was fantastick, superstition and philosophy combined to create gods, whose existence could not be demonstrated. But these gods, these hypothetical deities, did not interfere with the one Supreme Being, even in the minds of those who worshipped them: "à rebus physicis tracta ratio "ad commentitios et fictos deos." These were the most ancient, and like the sun, the first and

* Ratio quæ ex rebus perceptis ad id quod non percipiebatur aducit. Acad. Quæst. l. 2.

principal,

principal objects of adoration. They were the dii majorum gentium. But they were visible and generated gods, as they are called by Plato: and however confusedly this appellation was employed in common use, the Θεοὶ were always distinguished from ὁ Θεὸς and τὸ Θεῖον. The Timæus distinguishes them sufficiently; and Proclus, in his comment upon it, where he mentions the doubts and disputes that arose about the many, affirms that the belief of one God was uniform. Even they, who believed some of the many eternal, believed them so by an eternal creation or procession from the one, and if equal in time, yet not so in the order of nature and causality, nor selfexistent. Celsus was a strenuous polytheist, and yet when he pleaded for the worship of dæmons, he asserted, "that the one true God is never to be neglected, "neither by day nor night, neither in publick nor "private, neither in words nor actions; but that "our minds ought to be directed constantly to "him." In short, when the pagan theists were called upon to explain themselves, they made a profession of their faith easily reconciled to true theism: and the fathers of the church, who rejected, like Eusebius, these professions as those of men who only denied what they were shamed from owning by christianity, had a very ill grace; since they themselves were every day employed to explain and alter old doctrines by new, and were nursing up a sort of polytheism, which became little different from that of the pagans, and which

needs, at this hour, as much indulgence to make it pass for any thing else.

That there were some men who knew not God in all ages, may be true; but the scandalous task of combating his existence, under the mask of theism was reserved for metaphysicians and theologians. It was undertaken probably as soon as philosophers, who professed such sciences, arose. It was undertaken certainly in an unknown antiquity; for as early as the most ancient, and especially the most learned nations appear to us, we see such doctrines and institutions established, as owe plainly their original to objections raised against the proceedings of Divine Providence. What were the Osiris and Typho of the Egyptians, the Oromazes and Arimanius of the magi, the good and bad planets of the Chaldæans, the Zeus and Hades of the Greeks, the Monas and Dyas of Pythagoras, the concord and discord, or two principles of other philosophers; what were all these but so many inventions, piously designed to account for the mixture of good and evil, that there is in the world? To account for the supposed unjust distribution of them, other expedients had been found. Beside a metempsychosis or transmigration of souls, from the bodies of men into those of birds, beasts, fishes, and after a revolution of many ages into the bodies of men again, the Egyptians held a Heaven and a Hell, into one of which the good were to be received, and to live with the gods, while the wicked were tormented in the other. Pythagoras and Plato had

had learned this doctrine from them*. But the former thought to give it more weight by pretending to have gone in person to the infernal shades: and the latter quoted, for the same purpose, Heres of Pamphilia, who had been sent from thence to relate what he had seen and heard there. It is worth while to mention the particulars related by him, in order to show how much the ancient theists were persuaded, that nothing less than the existence of all mankind in a future state, and a more exact distribution of rewards and punishments, could excuse the assumed irregular and unjust proceedings of Providence in this life, on which atheists founded an objection that the others admitted too easily. Æacus then, and Minos, and Rhadamanthus sat in judgment in the field of truth, "in campo veritatis." All the souls of the dead were brought before this tribunal. There they were tried, and the separation of the righteous from the wicked was made. The former were placed on the right hand, the latter on the left: the former went upward, to live with the gods in Heaven, the latter downward, to live with the furies in Hell. Of these, however, a distinction was made. Such souls as were judged curable, and required only a little more purification, the animæ sanabiles, were delivered from Hell after a year of suffering; and for this purpose a review of souls was made annually. Let me observe, by the way, that the doctrine of Pur-

* Plato de Rep. l. 10.

gatory is plainly proved by this doctrine, according to Clarke's way of proving, and better than by a passage in one of the books of the Maccabees, to be agreeable to sound reason, and the unprejudiced light of nature in general; and that the particular circumstance of an annual review of souls favours extremely a fact which the Franciscan monks asserted, and the council of Basle censured, the annual descent of their founder into Purgatory; from whence he delivered, by a special privilege, and carried with him to Heaven, the souls of all those of his own order*. What use may be made of these observations, I leave it to you to determine. But I think, you will agree with me on the whole, that the cavils raised, on account of physical and moral evil, are as old as metaphysicks and theology.

They who arrived by proofs, à posteriori, at a demonstration of God's existence, might think, very rationally, that whatever discoveries they made further, concerning his nature, his attributes, and his will, must be made by the same means, and that what could not be so discovered, could not be discovered at all. Thus men of common sense might think, and by proceeding in this method, they might be sure of acquiring as much knowledge as they wanted, and be safe against falling into errour; since to proceed in this method is to follow natural revelation, and

* Beatus Franciscus ex divino privilegio quotannis ad Purgatorium descendit, suosque omnes ad Cœlum deducit. Spond. an. 1443.

instead

instead of employing our reason about the suggestions of imagination, to employ her about those of nature, which are the suggestions of God himself. But we may be assured, that there were, in those days, as there are in ours, men of uncommon sense, who, setting themselves far above the vulgar, proceeded on a very vulgar principle, and made themselves the measure of all Being, of the Supreme Being among the rest. When modern divines tell us, that we are made after the image of God, they mean it with a regard to our intellectual system, and they proceed in the very same manner with those ancient divines, who made God after their own image. To say the first, is more decent; but the last is always done; for there can be no application from God, whom we do not know, to man. The application must be made, and it always is so, from man, whom we do know, to God.

When we contemplate the works of God "..... cum suspicimus magni cœlestia mundi "templa super stellisque micantibus æthera fix-"um, et venit in mentem lunæ solisque viarum;" they give us very clear and determined ideas of wisdom and power, which we call infinite, because they pass, in the exercise of them, all the bounds of our conceptions. Thus far the reasoner à posteriori went formerly, and goes now; because the phænomena conduct him thus far, and give him these ideas, with an invariable uniformity. But the reasoners à priori have been never thus confined. As soon as they had proved to them-

selves the existence of a first intelligent Cause of all things, which can be proved by the other method alone, they abandoned it, and having assumed that divine and human intelligence are the same, in kind at least, they proceeded in all their reasonings about the nature, moral attributes, and will of God, not only without regard to the phænomena, but often in direct contradiction to them. In short, no true theist ever asserted, with greater assurance, this undeniable truth, that every thing which God has done is, for that very reason, right, than these false theists have asserted the repugnancy of many things, in the constitution and government of the world, to the moral attributes, and even to the wisdom of God. God is, in their notion of him, nothing more than an infinite man. He knows as we know, is wise as we are wise, and moral as we are moral; but his knowledge, his wisdom, and his morality are in their nature infinite, though they are not exercised alike in the production of all the phænomena, nor with a constant harmony, nor consistency.

XLI.

No man has been more dogmatical on this head than Clarke*. He is much scandalised at those theists, among others, who being so absurd as to imagine that goodness and justice are not the

* Evid. p. 26.

same

same in God which they are in our ideas, but something transcendent, think it is impossible we should argue with any certainty about them. This opinion, he says, does not stand on any consistent principles, and must finally recur to absolute atheism. Now I own very freely, that the opinion is mine, and that it is one of those which I think it impious to alter, "quæ deseri à me, "dum quidem spirare potero, nefas judico." Far from apprehending, that I shall be reduced to atheism by holding it, the doctor seems to me in some danger of being reduced to manifest absurdity by holding the contrary opinion.

After repeating over and over, of all the moral attributes, that they are the same in God as they are in our ideas, and that he who denies them to be so may as well deny the divine physical attributes, the doctor insists only on two of the former, on those of justice and goodness. He was much in the right to contract the generality of his assertion. The absurdity of ascribing temperance for instance, or fortitude to God, would have been too gross and too visible even to eyes that prejudice had blinded the most. But that of ascribing justice and goodness to him, according to our notions of them, might be better covered, and was enough for his purpose, though not less really absurd.

If justice and goodness be not the same in God as in our ideas*, then we mean nothing when we

* Evid. p. 26.

say, that God is necessarily just and good, and, for the same reason, it may as well be said, that we know not what we mean, when we affirm, that he is an intelligent and wise Being. These are the doctor's own words, and surely they show, that great men, in common estimation, are sometimes great triflers. When they, who are of his opinion, affirm, that God is necessarily just and good, according to their precise notions of justice and goodness, they know, indeed, what they mean, and they mean very presumptuously. When they, who are not of his opinion, say, that God is just and good, they too have a meaning, which is not less reasonable for being more modest. They ascribe all conceivable perfections to God, moral and physical, which can belong to a divine nature and to a Supreme Being; but they do not presume to limit them to their conceptions, which is their crime with doctor Clarke. Every thing shows the wisdom and power of God, conformably to our ideas of wisdom and power in the physical world and in the moral. But every thing does not show, in like manner, the justice and goodness of God, conformably to our ideas of these attributes in either. The physical attributes are in their nature more glaring, and less equivocal. The divine and the atheist, therefore, deny that to be just or good, which is not one or the other according to their ideas. The theist acknowledges whatever God has done to be just and good in itself, though it does not appear such in every instance, conformably to his ideas of justice and goodness.

goodness. He imputes the difference to the defect of his ideas, and not to any defect of the divine attributes. Where he sees them, he owns them explicitly: where he does not see them, he pronounces nothing about them. He is as far from denying them, as he is from denying the wisdom and power of God. In every case he knows what he means, and his meaning is in every case rational, pious, and modest.

Will the divine say, that he does not deny the justice and goodness of God, because he proves them, in general, à priori; and that when he denies them in particular instances, he only denies the complete exercise of them in this world, because that is reserved for another? When he proves then the justice and goodness of God, he proves them as he could not prove even his intelligence, that is à priori: and when he denies them, his denial is absolute; unless an hypothesis, which may be denied on much better grounds, for we speak here of reason, not of revelation, be true. But what is this proof à priori? Does it prove that justice and goodness, though they are so connected with the physical attributes, that when we ascribe one we are obliged, by necessary consequence, to ascribe the other to the Supreme Being, are yet so distinct, that they may be separated in the exercise of them, and that either of them may act as independently of his wisdom, as of one another? If this be said, they who say it may assume, in consequence, that the Supreme Being

Being is sometimes partial, instead of being always just, and sometimes evil, instead of being always good; which hypothesis might have saved the ancients the trouble of inventing that of the two principles, and sets the reasoning of such a divine, as Clarke, on principles as little consistent as that of an atheist. Does the argument à priori prove that the justice, and goodness, and wisdom, and power of God are so intimately connected, and are so much the same by nature, that they cannot be separated in the exercise of them? In this case, his natural attributes absorb the moral. The will of God is not determined, sometimes by one moral attribute, and sometimes by another, like that of man, but by a concurrence of them all with his wisdom in every act of it. God is then infinitely wise: he does always that which is fittest to be done. That which is fittest to be done is is always just and good, and the dispute is over.

No, says the divine. However you distinguish, or however you blend the divine attributes, there is a rule, according to which the exercise of these attributes is determined, and must be characterised. This rule is the reason of things, resulting from their eternal relations, which are such as they appear to be to the understandings of all intelligent beings. God appeals to this rule; we have a right to judge him by it: and therefore, when he appears neither just nor good à posteriori, though we know him to be so à priori, we must have recourse to some hypothesis or other, in order to reconcile the exercise

of

of his attributes to this rule. "Quo teneam Pro-"tea nodo?" It is hard to follow men, from supposition to supposition, through all the mazes of metaphysical theology. There is no end of it neither: and if I showed Clarke, that the understanding of all mankind, his own among the rest, are extremely apt to understand things to be what they are not, that they are imperfect and depraved *, and that his rule of judging God by man is, therefore, to the last degree impertinent, on this account, as well as on many others; if all this was shown, I say, it would not serve to silence men, who seek nothing more than to maintain the honour of the gown by having the last word in every dispute. We shall do better therefore, to go as far back as we can to the origin of this dispute, where we shall find, if I mistake not, that as it is carried on, so it was founded on a previous question or two, miserably begged on one side, and as foolishly granted on the other.

The argument, by which Epicurus endeavoured to prove, that there could be no God, since there was such a thing as evil in the world, is stated more strongly than it is refuted by Lactantius, in his book De Irâ Dei. Au. Gellius quotes a passage of Q. Claudius, the annalist, wherein the gods are condemned for their iniquitous distribution of good and evil †: and Plutarch introduces

* Dem. p. 125.

† Hæc maxime versatur deorum iniquitas, quod deteriores sint incolumiores, neque optimum quempiam inter nos sinunt diurnare. L. 17, C. 2.

his

his dialogue, concerning the delay of divine justice in punishing the crimes of men, by supposing that Epicurus, who was just gone out of the company, had poured forth a whole torrent of blasphemy against the providence of God for this delay. In the third book of the Nature of the Gods, all the powers of elocution are called forth, in a sprightly declamation to exaggerate physical and moral evil, and to conclude as directly, as an academician could conclude, from their existence, and from the assumed unjust dispensations of Providence, that there is no God. These instances, to which I refer you, are sufficient. They are ancient themselves, and they are copies of others much more ancient. But as bold as the charge is, and as high as it was sounded, the belief of God's existence could not have been shaken by it in the minds of men, nor could they have been reduced, as they have been from the most early ages, to defend a demonstrated truth by evasions, by sophisms, by hypotheses, and by all the low expedients that are employed to palliate errour, if theists had not been seduced many ways into a confederacy with atheists.

The case before us affords a signal example, the most signal that it is possible to imagine, of the danger we run, whenever we soar, in the vague of abstract reasoning, too far from the phænomena of our system. To be real, our knowledge must rise in it. To be useful, it must be applicable to it. But philosophers appear often like comets, that rise out of our system, just cross it,

it, disorder it, and go out of it again. The general observation has been inculcated throughout all I have written, and it has been just now applied, particularly to the proceeding of those reasoners à priori, who either became atheists themselves, or who supported the cavils of those who were such, till these cavils became arguments founded on atheistical principles, and therefore difficult, I might say impossible, for those who had established these principles, to answer. A self-existent Being, the first Cause of all things, infinitely powerful, and infinitely wise, is the God of natural theology: and we may advance, without any fear of being disproved, that as the whole system of the universe bears testimony to this great truth, so the whole system of natural religion rests on it, and requires no broader foundation. These systems are God's systems. That of our knowledge is given and limited, that of our duty is prescribed and revealed by him. Both are adequate to one another; both are commensurate: we have no knowledge beyond our duty, nor any duty beyond our knowledge.

What now has artificial theology pretended to add to that knowledge of the deity, which natural theology communicates? It pretends to connect, by very problematical reasonings à priori, moral attributes, such as we conceive them, and such as they are relatively to us, with the physical attributes of God, though there be no sufficient foundation for this proceeding in the phænomena of nature: nay, though the phænomena are, as it has been said already, in several cases repugnant.

God

God is just, and good, and righteous, and holy, as well as powerful and wise. Man is made in the image of God; he is little lower than the angels, or inferior gods, in the Platonick scheme. Nay, he is superior to them: there is no intermediate being between God and man in the stoical scheme. "Homini præstare quis possit nisi Deus? was the question of Chrysippus. And Seneca assumes a friendship, a necessary relation, a likeness between God and good men. The good man is the disciple of God; he emulates God; he is the true offspring of God*.

Such were the notions of ancient theists, and on such it was natural for them to assume, that this world was made for man; and that the Supreme Being could have no other motive to make so noble a creature, except that of communicating happiness to him. The atheists saw their advantage. They saw that artificial theology gave them the means of unravelling that thread, which natural theology had spun, and of playing the assumed, against the demonstrated attributes. They might ask, as they did, if God be good and holy, how comes it that there is any such thing as evil in the world? If he be just and righteous, how comes it that the best men have often the greatest share of this evil? The pagan theists were extremely puzzled how to answer these questions, so as to prevent the conclusion, there is no God; and

* . . . Amicitia est . . . . imo etiam necessitudo et similitudo . . : . discipulus ejus, æmulatorque, et vera progenies. L. de Provid.

therefore

therefore they had recourse generally to the hypothesis of two coexisting principles, and thought, like Plutarch*, that it was better to abridge the power of Jupiter, than to impute to him that he caused or suffered evil. When they had not this recourse, they talked mere nonsense, figurative, sublime, metaphysical, but nonsense still. The Stoicks, those zealous assertors of the Supreme God, and defenders of his providence, had all a tang of enthusiasm, or they all affected it. Demetrius was of the first sort, no doubt; and so might Seneca be, who quotes him, and who took much pains to work himself, and his friend Lucilius, up to the same temper of mind. At least his treatise about Providence is a rhapsody of paradox and enthusiasm, ingenious, affecting, and little to the purpose. I have quoted Lactantius for the argument of Epicurus†. I might quote him for such an answer to it as deserves to have it's place among the unexpected sayings, the inopinata of the Stoicks, and no where else. God can, but he will not, according to this father, take away the evil that is in the world; because, if we did not know evil, we could not know good, "... nisi "prius malum agnoverimus nec bonum poterimus "agnoscere:" and because there is much more advantage and pleasure in the enjoyment of that wisdom, by which alone we know the latter, than there is trouble and pain in the evil we suffer. "Plus boni ac jucunditatis in sapientiâ, quam in

* Adv. Stoicos. † De Ira Dei, C. 13.

"malis

"malis molestiæ." Thus the father proves, that all things were made for the sake of man, evil as well as good. "Constat igitur omnia propter "hominem proposita tam mala quam etiam bona."

That man is the final cause of the whole creation, and that God could have no other motive to make him, except that of communicating happiness to him, are propositions assumed by all the ancient and modern theists, those of paganism and those of christianity. Love was the first or chief of the gods. Love was the first principle of things. Love of his creatures in idea determined God to draw them forth into existence. That God loves us even to fondness, "usque in delicias amamur,"* would such a writer, as Seneca, say. That God loves us heartily, is the language of such a writer as Clarke. Such assumptions as have been mentioned, founded on such notions as these, were inculcated in all ages by artificial theology, and could not fail to be so with success; because they flattered human nature, who is besides her own flatterer and seducer. "Blanda adulatrix et quasi "lena sui." The productions of Infinite Power were confined long to the system of one planet alone, and the exercise of Infinite Wisdom to the affairs of one animal chiefly. When further discoveries opened by degrees a more noble view of the universe, and experience and reflection obliged men to think on many occasions a little more modestly of their own importance, if physicks

* Sen. de Benef. L. 4.

mortified

mortified them, metaphysicks raised their spirits again. Fantastick knowledge became as indulgent to self-love, and to the pride of the human heart, as real ignorance had ever been: and although some of the puerilities and superstitions, which had prevailed in the nonage of philosophy, were laid aside, yet some of these, and other opinions as extravagant and as inconsistent as these, were taught in the schools of theology. They who came theists, and they who came atheists out of these schools, triumphed equally: the former in those doctrines that raised very nearly the human up to the divine nature; the latter in those that debased the divine moral character of God as low as human ideas of moral perfections. Theology furnished arms on both sides. The theist confirmed men in the belief of a Supreme Being, and set their passions on his side, when he represented the predilection of this Being for them who were alone, or in common with the generated gods, the final cause of the whole creation, and who were made to exist, that there might be rational and proper objects of God's munificence in the world. The atheist proceeded, on the same theistical principles, to shake this belief of a Supreme Being. That they must be true, if there was such a Being, he asserted as loudly as the divine. But he worked himself up to doubt, and he set, in his turn, the passions of men on his side, by declaiming pathetically against the physical and moral evil, that abounds in the world; by censuring the dispensations of Providence in it,

and by showing, that many of the phænomena are not reconcilable to our ideas of holiness, of goodness, of justice, and at the same time of wisdom and power. He came at last to deny, that there was any God; because he could not discover such a metaphysical and moral god as artificial theology had imagined.

The arguments of the atheist were so strong ad hominem, for they are such in no other manner, that the theist found himself obliged to seek the usual refuge of philosophers, who affect to dogmatise beyond their knowledge, and even beyond all their real, their clear, and well determined ideas; the refuge I mean of hypotheses, by which they endeavour to evade what they cannot answer. That of two principles was the refuge of pagans from time immemorial, and of a famous sect of hereticks in the christian church. That of the fall of man, and of the continued malice of the first tempter, the old serpent, who caused it, was the refuge of orthodox christians. By this they hoped to account for the introduction of physical and moral evil, consistent with the propositions assumed, "that the world was made for man, and "man to be happy in it." By the hypothesis of a future state of rewards and punishments, both pagans and christians hoped to reconcile the dispensations of Providence in this life to the moral attributes of God, and to the rule of his conduct, which they assumed likewise to be the same in him as they are in human ideas.

The hypothesis of two principles, self-existing, infinite,

infinite, opposite, is full of absurdities. But abstract it from these, and consider it only as it accounts for the introduction of evil, and it will appear much more plausible, though it be not more reasonable, than that of the fall of Adam, and the malice of the Devil. The first saves, or seems to save, all the attributes of the good God. They all exist in him, as the theist conceives them. They are all exerted by him, as the theist assumes. But he is opposed by a coequal bad principle: and that mixture of good and evil, which appears in the frame and government of the world, arises from the perpetual struggle of these rival powers. The last is full of absurdities likewise; but abstract it from these, and still you will find, that it saves the divine attributes in no respect. It answers no purpose in opposition to atheism, and it could be so applied in good earnest, whatever other purpose it had been made to answer, by no theists, who understood their own hypothesis, and the objections of their adversaries. The goodness, and even the wisdom of God, lie just as much exposed for suffering an inferior being, his creature, and a creature in actual rebellion, to baffle the designs it is assumed that he had, as they would lie, if these designs were acknowledged to have been imperfectly executed by him. The severity with which he punished our first parents for a fault, which he foreknew that they would commit when he abandoned their freewill to the temptation of committing it, for there would be too much horrour in supposing them predestinated

to commit the fault; this severity, I say, and much more that which has been exercised on the whole race of mankind, who share the punishment, though they had no share in the crime, cannot be reconciled to our ideas of justice. The introduction of physical and moral evil, therefore, could not be imputed more really to the Supreme Being independently of this hypothesis, than he is made the author of them by it, with the aggravating circumstance of punishing the innocent for what he permitted, in one sense of the word, the guilty to do.

XLII.

The dispensations of Providence, in the distribution of good and evil, stand in no need of any hypothesis to justify them: and if they did, that of a future state of rewards and punishments would be sufficient. These two propositions may be made, I think, very evident: and I shall endeavour to make them so, before I quit the subject. Reason will neither deny nor affirm, that there is to be a future state: and the doctrine of rewards and punishments in it has so great a tendency to enforce civil laws, and to restrain the vices of men, that reason, who cannot decide for it on principles of natural theology, will not decide against it on principles of good policy. Let this doctrine rest on the authority of revelation. A theist, who does not believe the revelation, can have no objection to the doctrine in general. But even a theist, who does believe the revelation, may

may refuse to admit the doctrine on principles on which it is established by divines, and may disapprove the use they make of it in several respects.

The hypotheses that have been crayoned out, are the chief pillars of artificial theology. Some of them were assumed in compliance with the overweening notions of their own worth and importance, which men are prone to entertain, and by which they raise themselves up to the imaginary heights that have been mentioned: though the distance between our friend Gay's Fly, in his Fables, and the infinite selfexistent Being, is not a whit greater, than that between this Being and Socrates or St. Paul, the two apostles of the Gentiles. Other hypotheses were invented to maintain these; and by tagging one hypothesis to another, men deviated at last so far from natural theology, and raised so much confusion in their notions about it, that they had no means left of returning to the first principle of this theology, nor of clearing to common apprehension a little of this confusion, but those of another hypothesis. Strange effect of theological skill! It makes a demonstrated truth depend on a precarious supposition. If there is not a future state, God is neither good nor just, according to our ideas of goodness and justice, in his dispensations. If he is not good and just, according to our ideas of these moral attributes, neither can the physical attributes, such as infinite wisdom and power, belong to him; and a Being, who has none of these, is not God. But there is a future state.

Thus divines have dared to argue; and I am justified in saying, that they betray the cause of God to the atheist, when they join with him in so many points, that nothing remains to be opposed to him, in defence of God's existence, but the problematical and futile reasonings they employ to prove a future state.

We are apt to carry the judgments we make into extremes, and the characters we give into panegyricks or satires. The examples of this kind are without number, but none are so remarkable as those, which we find in writers ancient and modern concerning the human nature. No creature is so miserable, in some descriptions, nor so necessitous, as man. He comes into the world bemoaning his state. He grows up, and passes through the human state, exposed to many wants and bodily infirmities, unknown to the brute creation. You remember, no doubt, those fine verses in Lucretius*:

Tum porro puer, ut sævis projectus ab undis
Navita, nudus humi jacet infans, indigus omni
Vitali auxilio . . . . . .
Vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut æquum est
Cui tantum in vitâ restat transire malorum.
At variæ crescunt pecudes, &c. . . .

No creature is to be compared with man in other descriptions, and in a contrary sense. He was made of earth; but this earth was impregnated with celestial seeds, if you will take Ovid's† word for it.

* Lib. 5. † Metam. L. 1.

. . . Recens

. . . Recens tellus, seductaque nuper ab alto
Æthere, cognati retinebat semina cœli.

He was made in the image of the gods, and his very form denoted his divine original.

Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
Jussit, &c.

Some of these writers degrade even the human mind, and that intelligence and reason wherein we triumph. Plato, who in one mood raises man up to the contemplation of the abstract forms of all things, sends him in another for instruction to the beasts of the field: and the Hospes in the Politicus reckons their conversation among the means of improvement in philosophy and the knowledge of nature, which men enjoyed under the reign of Saturn. Montagne, another prose poet, deals with man as divines deal with God, and having drawn down human nature as low as he could, he raises that of some other animals so high, that he ascribes a sense of religion to elephants, and represents them deep in meditation and contemplation before the rising sun, and attentive at certain hours of the day to perform certain acts of devotion. He took this from Pliny *, and he might have added, on the same authority, among other excellencies, that they understood the language of their country, loved glory, and were great moralists; a commen-

* L. 8, c. 1.

dation seldom due to men, "quæ etiam in homine "rara." But Cotta, in the third book of the Nature of the Gods, goes so far as to assert, that human reason, far from being an advantage, is a disadvantage to man, the worst present that Heaven could make him, and one of the plagues of human life. "Pestifera multis, admodum paucis "salutaris." The academician complains, that it is bountifully and largely bestowed, "tam mu- "nificè et tam largè dari." But the whole chorus of theistical philosophers and of divines boast it to be the distinguishing gift of God to man, that which gives him a preeminence and a right of command over his fellow creatures. Ovid * calls him for this reason, sanctius, his animal: and the Stoick, whom Cotta answered, had not only distinguished him from other animals, but coupled him with the gods. The sole beings who have reason are god sand men . . . . "dii et homines, "quibus profectò nihil est melius." In a word metaphysicians have refined and subtilised their discourses on this favourite theme into a jargon which has no meaning at all, or a blasphemous meaning: and they would stand justly exposed to the ridicule of common sense, if common sense could resolve to laugh at blasphemy. There have been those who taught, that the human is a portion of the divine soul. Others † have been more modest, and have allowed, that the former is a created being, "creatura quæ mens dicitur ra-

* L. 1, C. 2. † Porph. Plotin. St. Austin. Malb. &c.

"tionalis,"

" tionalis;" but a being of so high an order, that there is none superiour, except the Supreme Being, and that these two are more closely and intimately united, than the human soul is to the body it informs.

There is a middle point between these extremes, where the truth lies; and he who seeks it may find it. He will not find what the principles of divine or even of human intelligence is. But he will soon find, that the distance between them, whatever they are, is so immense as to admit in reality no degree of comparison. He will find, on the other hand, many such degrees between the human intelligence and that of various animals. He may be induced perhaps to think, that intellectual faculties and corporeal senses, of the same and of different kinds, are communicated in some proportion or other to the whole race of animals; but he will be still conscious of his superiority, as they themselves are most apparently, such of them at least as know mankind; not the sagacious elephant alone, who submits to his service, but the lion and the tiger, who make him occasionally their prey.

Man is then the principal inhabitant of this planet, a being superior to all the rest. But will it follow from hence, that the system wherein this planet rolls, or even this planet alone, was made for the sake of man? Will it follow, that Infinite Wisdom had no other end in making man, than that of making a happy creature? Surely not. The suppositions are arbitrary, and

the

the consequences absurd. There is no pretence to say, that we have any more right to complain of the evils which affect our state, than our fellow creatures of the evils which affect theirs, or which are common to both. Many of them have plainly some foresight of the future, and of physical effects more than we have. But all of them feel the present. Because God has given us intellectual powers superior to theirs, to them more instinct perhaps, to us more reason certainly, is he cruel and unjust, because he has not given us invulnerable and impeccable natures? By reason we learn to avoid, or to soften, or to remedy, many evils to which we are exposed. By reason we ought to learn to bear such as can be neither avoided, nor softened, nor cured. If we employ our reason only to aggravate these evils in our imaginations, and to complain more loudly, far from having a better right to do so, we are on this very account just so much the more impertinent and absurd.

The whole tribe of divines assert, that the goodness of God required he should make the world for the sake of man, and man purposely to make a happy creature. Those among them, who rise higher in metaphysicks, assert, "that God can "act for himself alone, and can create rational beings for no reason but that of being known "and loved by them *." Now I, who know just as

* Vid. Malb. Preface to the Recherche, &c.

much

much of this matter as all or any of these dogmatical persons, deny, on my own authority, what they affirm, on theirs; and while they pretend arrogantly to demonstrate, will presume modestly and diffidently to guess. What they say hangs ill together, I leave it to them to reconcile, among a multitude of other inconsistencies, and shall only observe, on the latter part, since we reason on human ideas, for we have no others whereon to reason, that they who advance it entertain a very false notion of beneficence. A heathen moralist would have taught them better. No one confers a benefit, who has himself and his own interest and satisfaction alone in view, "si "una dandi causa est se intueri ac commodum "suum, illud non beneficium sed fœnus est." From hence Seneca * concludes, that all the benefits we receive from God are truly benefits; since God can reap no advantage to himself in bestowing them, and would, therefore, bestow none, if utility to himself could be his motive. "Nam si una beneficii dandi causa sit dantis uti-"litas, nulla autem ex nobis utilitas Deo spe-"randa est, nulla dandi Deo beneficii causa "est."

But the former part of what is asserted on this occasion by divines requires much more discourse. They who assert, that man and the happiness of man, were the final causes of the creation, seem to have ideas no better determined of goodness

* L. 4.

than

than the others of beneficence; for if there be not a certain proportion kept in the exercise of it, the seeming goodness of the heart is really the weakness of the mind. You see at once what numberless instances might be produced to exemplify this truth. Let me ask now the greatest flatterers of human nature, what proportion there is between the excellencies of it, and the goodness of God, that should determine his Infinite Wisdom to judge it essential to his goodness, when he resolved to make man, to make a planet the more for the habitation of this ideal creature? The habitation is fit for him, and he is fitted to live in it. He could not exist in any other. But will it follow, that the planet was made for him, not he for the planet? The ass would be scorched in Venus or Mercury, and be frozen in Jupiter or Saturn. Will it follow, that this temperate planet was made for him, to bray and to eat thistles in it?

But I hear the divine reply, that man is a rational being, far superior to the brute creation, and alone more worthy than all of them, to be the final cause of the world he and they inhabit. That he alone has reason may be too much to grant, since several of the faculties, in the exercise of which it consists, are exercised by other animals, as every man, who is not Cartesian enough to believe more than Descartes believed himself, must allow. But whether the difference of that which is called reason in man, and the intelligence of other animals, be in kind or in degree only, one

one way or other certain it is, that his superiority over them is very real and very great, according to all our ideas of order. It was this consideration, and this partial comparison of him with the creatures of his own system, that made the human pass for the first of all rational natures, after the divine, among those who had no suspicion of any others. Such were the narrow and confined ideas, which it appears, by sacred as well as profane philosophy, that all the ancients entertained of the works of God. Modern discoveries in astronomy have presented them to us in a more noble scene. We cannot doubt that numberless worlds and systems of worlds compose this amazing whole, the universe; and as little, I think, that the planets, which roll about our sun, or those which roll about a multitude of others, are inhabited by living creatures, fit to be the inhabitants of them. When we have this view before our eyes, can we be stupid or impertinent and vain enough to imagine, that we stand alone or foremost among rational created beings? We who must be conscious, unless we are mad, and have lost the use of our reason, of the imperfection of our reason? Shall we not be persuaded rather, that as there is a gradation of sense and intelligence here from animal beings imperceptible to us for their minuteness, without the help of microscopes and even with them, up to man, in whom, though this be their highest stage, sense and intelligence stop short and remain very imperfect; so there is a gradation from man, through various forms of

sense,

Let us proceed in another method, argue from knowledge not from imagination, and advance nothing more than the former will justify. The former will justify enough to refute abundantly the two allies.

XLIII.

THE demonstration of God's existence is founded in knowledge, and pursued with intuitive certainty through every step of it. This the divine will admit; and this the atheist is so little able to deny, that he has recourse to cavil, as it has been said already, and endeavours vainly to unravel the thread he cannot break. I assume, therefore, nothing more than what is proved, when I assert, that the Supreme Being is infinitely wise as well as powerful: and if he be infinitely wise, I need not stand to prove, that he always knows, and always does that which he knows is fittest to be done. To choose the best end, and to proportion the means to it, is the very definition of wisdom. Two things are then evident. One, that since Infinite Wisdom determined to call into existence every being that does exist, and to constitute that universal system, which we call the system of nature, it was right and fit that Infinite Power should be exercised for this purpose. The other, that since Infinite Wisdom not only established the end, but directed the means, the system of the universe must necessarily be the best of all possible systems, which it could not be, nor even a consistent

consistent scheme, unless the whole was the final cause of every part, and no one, nor more parts, the final causes of the whole. The universe is an immense aggregate of systems. Every one of these, if we may judge by our own, contains several; and each of these again, if we may judge by our own, is made up of a multitude of different modes of being, animated and inanimated, thinking and unthinking, rational and irrational, different natures designed for different purposes, but all concurring in that one common system, as we discern in too many instances, not to have reason to believe it in all. Just so it is with respect to the various systems, and systems of systems, that compose the universe. As distant as they are, and as different as we may imagine them to be, they are all tied together by relations and connections, by gradations and dependencies. The great material parts of our solar system act on one another in more ways than philosophy has been yet able to discover, and that of comets is not, perhaps, the only communication that other systems have with ours. Unthinking matter is dispersed in various forms throughout the universe: and we see a gradation of them in the world we inhabit, from stones and other inert bodies up to vegetables, and such as have in themselves, however inanimate, a natural, though not spontaneous activity. So may we believe most reasonably, that various forms of thinking substance, or the faculties of sense and thought in various degrees, are dispersed likewise throughout the universe. We observe a gradation of

them here, and we may well persuade ourselves, that there is a gradation of them through various ranks of beings, from the lowest degrees in our world to the highest in some other.

I pretend not to dogmatise; but without having so much presumption I may say, that the notions here advanced seem much more conformable to those of a Supreme Being, and to all our ideas of order, than the contrary. They are probable in speculation, and the appearances of things are favourable to them; while the hypothesis that assumes the world, and did formerly assume the whole universe, made for man, and man solely to be happy, is not founded in reason, and is contradicted by experience. By the constitution of the material, and by that of the intellectual world, more dependent on the former, perhaps, than we are willing to believe, the human race is exposed to various evils, permanent and contingent, physical and moral. Of this philosophers have complained in all ages. This they could not reconcile to the goodness and justice of a God, such as they conceived him, nor on their principles; and therefore they cut the knot, by denying him, or threw themselves into an endless labyrinth of disputation by the acknowledgment of him. But on such principles as are here laid down, and in the truth of things most certainly, there is no ground for complaint, and there is abundant cause to give thanks. Though this world, and much more the universe, were not made for the sake of man; and though Infinite Wisdom contrived, and Infinite Power

Power executed the stupendous work for some nobler end, and some greater purpose, than the advantage of one poor vain mortal creature; yet has not the care of man been neglected in it. "In primâ illâ constitutione," says Seneca*, speaking of the world as the work of the gods, "cum "universa disponerent, etiam nostra viderunt, ra- "tionemque hominis habuerunt:" which opinion, so little consistent with the doctrine he teaches elsewhere, is far more reasonable. We labour hard, we complicate various means to arrive at one end; and several systems of conduct are often employed by us to bring about some paltry purpose. But God neither contrives, nor executes, like man. His means are simple, his purposes various: and the same system that answers the greatest, answers the least. Thus regard has been had to man, and not to him alone, but to all other animals, according to their different natures and ends.

Infinite Wisdom appears every where. Every new discovery, and how many and how marvellous have these been! is a new proof of this wisdom, as well as of the power of God. The power of executing is seen in every instance, and though we cannot discern the wisdom of contrivance and direction, which are more remote from our observation, in every instance, yet we see them in so many, that it becomes the highest absurdity not to acknowledge them in all. They, who do not ac-

* De Benef. L. 6.

knowledge them so, judge of the proceedings of an all-perfect Being (for even the atheist disputes, on this occasion, for argument's sake, on the supposition that there is one) as they would not judge of those of a prince or minister of state, who had acquired and deserved, by a long course of political conduct, the reputation of wisdom. These they would not dare to pronounce unwise in any case, because they saw the measures imperfectly, and because the ends were unknown to them. Yet thus they judge with respect to God. "Why does "the rain pour down into the sea, while the "sandy deserts of Lybia are parched with drought? "Why do wintry storms happen in the summer, "and irregular seasons destroy our harvests?" Such questions as these have been often asked, and all of them relatively to man. They have been answered in many instances by new discoveries, after the deaths of those who asked them: and posterity has been convinced, though they did not live to be so, that when they triumphed in them, they triumphed in their ignorance. Democritus, Epicurus, Strato, Alphonsus of Castile, in short, all the makers and menders of worlds, showed nothing but their ignorance and their presumption. They attempted to rise above God, and they are become the jest of mankind.

Though I think that the moral attributes of the Supreme Being are absorbed, as I expressed myself before, in his wisdom; that we should consider them only as different modifications of this physical attribute, whatever ideas we may frame on the

the phænomena; and that we must always talk precariously and impertinently when we presume to apply our ideas of them to the appearances of things: yet I think it proper to show the divine and the atheist, that even the goodness of God is not hard to defend against them both, by every one who denies, as every one may most reasonably, the question they beg, and grant, in consequence of their alliance to one another.

The wisdom is not so often discernible by us, as the power of God, nor the goodness as the wisdom. But a multitude of the phænomena being conformable to our ideas of goodness, we may reason about it as we did just now about the divine wisdom. If our adversaries show, that men are exposed to many physical and moral evils, we can show much more good of both kinds, that God has bestowed on us, or put into our power to procure to ourselves. The evils we complain of are constant and occasional effects of the constitution of a world, that was not made for our sakes. But the means to soften some, to prevent others, and to palliate and even cure those that cannot be prevented, are so many instances of the positive goodness of God; which ought to be brought to account and set against the evils, with greater gratitude, and more fairly, than they are by men who pass them slightly over, while they descend into every particular of the other sort, aggravate the least, and declaim pathetically and partially on all.

It would be easy to confirm and illustrate

what is advanced in the physical part, by numerous and unanswerable proofs, which are to be found in the writings of natural philosophers. These men have done more service to true theism than all the metaphysical reasoners à priori: or to say something more stronger, and equally true, they have done it more service than divines and atheists in confederacy have done it hurt. It is impossible to read, with attention and without prejudice, what the former have writ, and not to be convinced by fact, and by reason grounded on fact, not on hypothesis, first, that we ought to consider the world we inhabit no otherwise than as a little wheel in our solar system, nor our solar system any otherwise than as a little, but larger wheel, in the immense machine of the universe; and both the one and the other necessary perhaps to the motion of the whole, and to the preordained revolutions in it; nor without being convinced, secondly, that the wisdom, or, if you had rather say so, the goodness of God, has provided amply for the well-being of man in this world, and of the whole animal kind, who are objects of the divine care as well as he, according to their various destinations. In fine, and to take away every atheistical subterfuge; whether we say, that the several species of animals were the final causes of these things, which seem particularly adapted to the use of each; or whether we say, that the world was made such as it is without any regard to them; the proofs of divine wisdom and goodness will be equally strong: for if the world was made for the

universe

universe only, and without any regard to it's future inhabitants, this wisdom and goodness were exercised as much in fitting these inhabitants to live commodiously in a world already made, as they could have been in making a world on purpose for them.

But we are not to think in this manner of the divine proceedings, nor to imagine that in them one plan succeeded another. Both were alike present to the mind of God. Our planet might have been, even uninhabited, very fit for all the mechanical purposes of it in the material system. But there might be other purposes, which the creation of animals was necessary to answer: and since they were created, we ought to think that they were so for some purpose. It might be determined in the divine ideas, that there should be a gradation of life and intellect throughout the universe. In this case it was necessary, that there should be some creatures at our pitch of rationality, and others endued with all the degrees of life, sense, and intellect, which we observe in the several species from the insect up to man. This world might be allotted to such kinds and orders of animated beings: and though it was made for the universe, not for them, some regard might be had to them, and to their well being in the constitution of it. They were not made to be miserable. But even man was not made to be happier than it was consistent with this part of the material system. and with his own rank in the intellectual, that he should be.

XLIV.

THE truth is, that when we contemplate the phænomena, we cannot fail to discern, unless we live in a mist of metaphysicks, how repugnant to them it is to affirm, that the world was made for the sake of man alone. Some modern divines have been candid enough to give up the point, Archbishop King, at least, in his Essay on the Original of Evil, saw so plainly, that even the natural and real attributes of God, even his wisdom and his power, could not be otherwise defended against the cavils of atheism and of theology, that he scrupled not to declare the opinion to be absurd, and what no one would object, who was not blinded with pride and ignorance *. But we discern, at the same time, in the contemplation of the phænomena, that this world is accommodated in certain respects to the utility of the animals it contains, and that their natures are adapted in many more to the nature of the world. Thus the oblique position of the Earth, by the inclination of it's axis to the plane of the ecliptick, makes a more equal distribution of the sun's heat throughout the year, and in the different zones or climates, than there could be in any other position. Thus again, men and all other species of animals are fitted for different climates and different elements, wherein they find the nourish-

* C. 4. Sec. 2.

ment

ment and the employment proper to their different natures. The animal kind may seem to be a final cause of the first. The constitution of the world is evidently the reason of the last. I descend into no more particulars. You will find an abundance of them collected by Ray, Derham, Nieuentyt, and other writers, wherein the power and wisdom of God in the whole creation are displayed: and such proofs are brought that man and every species of the animal kind are fitted, in their very formation, for their state here, as nothing but the most irrational obstinacy can resist. The minutest instances are decisive, and those which seem the most obvious, because the most common, appear on a closer inspection not less astonishing than the greatest phænomena, and the more remote from observation. The animal eye, for instance, is not less astonishing in it's various situations, motions, and particular uses, than the eye of the world, the sun. To these writings let me refer you. Natural philosophy, thus applied, leads irresistibly to natural theology, and gives a just contempt for the figments and hypotheses of artificial. Read, contemplate, adore, give thanks, and be resigned.

Methinks I hear a sincere and devout theist, in the midst of such meditations as these, cry out, "No, the world was not made for man, nor man "only to be happy. The objections urged by "atheists and divines against the wisdom and "goodness of the Supreme Being, on these arbi-"trary suppositions, destroy their own founda-

"tions.

" tions. Mankind is exposed, as well as other
" animals, to many inconveniencies and to various
" evils, by the constitution of the world.' The
" world was not, therefore, made for him, nor
" he only to be happy. But he enjoys number-
" less benefits, by the fitness of his nature to
" this constitution, unasked, unmerited, freely
" bestowed: and though he returns, like other
" animals, to the dust, yet neither he nor they
" are willing to leave the state wherein they are
" placed here. The wisdom and the goodness of
" God are therefore manifest. I thank thee, O
" Creator! that I am placed in a rank, low in
" the whole order of being, but the first in that
" animal system to which I belong: a rank where-
" in I am made capable of knowing thee, and of
" discovering thy will, the perfection of my own
" nature, and the means of my own happiness.
" Far be it from me to repine at my present
" state, like those who deny thee; or like those
" who own thee, only to censure thy works, and
" the dispensations of thy Providence. May I
" enjoy thankfully the benefits bestowed on me by
" thy divine liberality. May I suffer the evils to
" which I stand exposed, patiently, nay willingly.
" None of thy creatures are made to be perfectly
" happy, like thyself; nor did thy goodness re-
" quire that they should be so. Such of them as
" are more worthy objects of it than thy human
" creatures, superior natures, that inhabit other
" worlds, may be affected in some degree or other
" by physical evils, since these are effects of the
" general

" general laws of matter and motion. They must
" be affected too in some degree or other by
" moral evil, since moral evil is the consequence
" of errour as well as of disorderly appetites and
" passions, and since errour is the consequence of
" imperfect understanding. Less of this evil may
" prevail among them. But all that is finite, the
" most exalted intelligencies, must be liable to
" some errours. Thou, O God! art alone that
" Being who is liable to none, and to whom in-
" fallibility and impeccability belong."

Duc me, parens celsique dominator poli,
Quocumque placuit. Nulla parendi mora est.
Assum impiger *.

Shall we suppose now, that an atheist and a divine break in upon the theist, and interrupt his pious meditations by insisting still, like the echoes of Epicurus, that if there is a God he must be infinitely good as well as wise and powerful, and by asking then how it comes to pass that there is any evil in the world? How comes it to pass, that the happiness of man is not more complete, and better provided for in it? Our theist would not be embarassed. His answer would be more ready than their reply. The first absurdity consists in this, that they apply their notions of goodness to the divine nature; and the second is this, that the argument they raise on these notions proves a great deal too much, Enough has been

* Sen. Ep. 107.

said

said concerning the first, and if the theist reasons on their notions of divine goodness, it is merely ex abundantiâ. But he will expose the second, by observing, that if goodness ought to be, as they assume, the sole directing principle in this case, and if wisdom ought to contrive, and power to execute under this direction, the happiness of man ought to be proportionable to the goodness of God, that is infinite; than which no greater absurdity can be conceived. But if we assume, in opposition to these confederates, that divine wisdom, whereof we have ideas much better determined than we have of divine goodness, ought to be deemed in this as in every other case the directing principle of divine conduct, it will follow without any absurdity, nay most agreeably to the reason of things, that the effect may be proportionable to the cause, that is, infinite. It implies contradiction to say, that God should have made a creature infinitely happy, as happy as himself. But it implies none to say, that he made a system of creation infinitely wise, and the best of all possible systems.

After this our theist would be apt to make many just reproaches to the two confederates. He would reproach the atheist with his spirit of cavil and the unfairness of his proceedings. You pretend, would he say, that you cannot believe a God, because you cannot reconcile many appearances, nor the state of mankind in general, to your notions of goodness. But on your principles you would not acknowledge him, if the proofs

proofs of his goodness were as clear, as uniform, and as numerous as those of his wisdom; for even to these you do not yield. These however are conformable to the notions of wisdom you must have, if you have any at all. You may cavil about the proofs of his goodness, and produce instances that seem repugnant to it, and that would be so if your hypothesis was true. But the proofs of his wisdom have nothing equivocal nor problematical in them upon any hypothesis. You can produce no instances that even seem to be repugnant to it. While natural philosophy was ill cultivated, and ill understood indeed, men founded their objections to the wisdom of God in their ignorance. But since the noble science has been improved by experiment and geometry, since greater discoveries of the causes and effects of the phænomena in the œconomy of the world have been made, every new discovery has been a new proof of the Wisdom of God, and it has shined conspicuous in the very instances brought against it.

It is a vain undertaking to go about to convince men of the goodness of God, who are obstinate enough to resist such evident demonstrations of his wisdom, or not to see that an All-perfect Being must always be determined by the harmonious concurrence of all his perfections; and not in one instance by his goodness, in another by his justice, and so on. When we say, that he is infinitely wise, we mean that he does on every occasion that which is fittest to be done, and it would imply contradiction to assert this, and to deny

deny the other. But however the theist might go one step further in reproaches to the atheist. With what face might he say to him can you object to the goodness of God, that men are exposed to general evils, to tempests, to earthquakes, to famine, to pestilence, as well as to particular evils, to pain, to sickness, to violent death? Is God not good, because they are exposed to evils, that result necessarily from the constitution of a world, which, if we should allow it to have been made for man, was made for the universe too, and to all of which evils they expose themselves voluntarily for no other reason than to indulge the ruling passion of their minds, and to sate their ambition or their avarice for instance, if these were to be sated? God has given us means, as I said above, to avoid, or to palliate, or to cure these evils in many cases. But men court them. The evils, that may be said to come from God, are, for the most part, soon over. The greatest of these calamities are seldom renewed; and few men have been, I suppose, exposed to the plague twice, or involved twice in the ruins of an earthquake. But ambition, avarice, and other ruling passions, are never sated: and the same persons expose themselves anew and continually to all the evils that accompany the pursuit of them. The theist might conclude this head very properly, by saying to the atheist, these evils, which you sound so highly and with so ill a grace, for the reasons that have been given, must be contingent effects of the constitution of the world, or they must

must be caused by particular directions. Take your choice. If you say the first, you say nothing that is inconsistent with the goodness of a Creator and Governor, while you confirm my hypothesis, that this world was made for the universe, not for man. If you say the last, you contradict yourself: you own that there is a God, and you acknowledge his providence.

The same theist might press his two adversasaries, the atheist and the divine both, in this manner still further. If you say, that God has not created the best of all possible systems in creating the universe, you deny that infinite wisdom, which you, the divine, assert, and the proofs of which you as well as I have challenged the atheist to controvert. If you say, that he has, you must either cease your complaints, or you must continue to complain on one of these two principles, that the Creator ought to have established a system that was not the best relatively to the whole of his design, that is to the universe, but the best relatively to man; or else that he ought to have created no such being as man. Thus you are driven from absurdity to absurdity; for thus you do something more absurd, if possible, than a direct denial of the wisdom of God would be. One of you admits, and the other cannot controvert this wisdom: and then you both assert, that he should not have acted conformably to it. His goodness should have controlled his wisdom. He should have changed the order of the universe, or he should have broke the

the chain of intellectual beings. Such an assumed conduct may be conformable to your ideas of goodness. But the ideas of God, if we may ascribe ideas to him, no more than his ways, are not those of man: and besides, such a conduct as this, even in human affairs, can answer no ideas but those of weakness, frailty, prepossession and partiality. These, therefore, you would ascribe to the all-perfect Being. Such is your impiety. One of you, that he may have a pretence to doubt of God's existence. The other, that he may have a pretence to be dogmatical about the designs of God, and the future dispensations of his Providence.

XLV.

It may be said, that the theist argues hypothetically in defence of the divine attributes, like the atheist and divine, who attack them. Now that he argues in some sort hypothetically, I agree. But that he argues in any sort like them, I deny. An hypothesis, which the phænomena contradict, or which is inconsistent even with one of them, is not admissible. An hypothesis, which they all concur to establish, is scarce an hypothesis. That the goodness of God required, that this world should be made for the sake of man, and he only to be happy, is an hypothesis of the first kind. That the goodness of God did not require this, and that his wisdom required something else, since it appears in his works that something else has been done, and since his works

works, which must be always conformable to his attributes, can alone enable us to judge concerning these; this, I say, is scarce an hypothesis. It is founded in fact, and is agreeable to our clearest and most distinct ideas. The atheist and the divine argue, from what they do not know, against what they do know; and in order to make the imposition pass, they trifle grossly between two methods of reasoning. One proves à posteriori, that there is a first intelligent Cause of all things. The other supposes it. After this, they attempt to prove à posteriori, that there is a necessary connection between the wisdom and power of this Being, and his goodness and justice, which are they, say, in him, the very same that they are in our ideas. After this, they return again to the former method, and attempt to prove à posteriori that he is neither good nor just. The theist employs no such artifice. He reasons uniformly, from the works of God, to his existence and his attributes: and reasoning in this manner he raises no objection to either, and is able to defend both.

I have spoke often of the pride of man, as the cause of many errours in philosophy, and especially in the first philosophy. It has no doubt a share in determining the atheist to the opinions that have been mentioned. But the atheist has another motive. His great aim is to free his mind from the belief that there is any Supreme Being. He struggles hard against demonstration,

and catches at every hypothesis, that may give him a pretence to doubt. Such a pretence he finds in that which assumes notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his designs in favour of man, and then opposes the phenomena to these notions. He has, on this occasion, the very singular advantage we have observed, that many of his adversaries agree with him in the premises, help him to establish them, and defend the cause of theism very ill against his conclusions afterward. Divines, who do in effect no less than betray this cause to him, have likewise their private motive. They are unwilling to lower, on any account, their notions of human worth and importance, or of the designs of God in favour of man; and for that reason, since these notions cannot be maintained on the appearances of things that are, they have endeavoured, in all ages, and in all religions, to maintain them on the supposition of things that may be: and the whole force of human imagination has been employed to sooth human pride. Much of what the pagans advanced hypothetically to keep up these notions, in opposition to the universal experience, is indeed no longer hypothetical; since it has been admitted into christianity. It is not hypothetical, I mean, when it is considered as a matter of revelation; for it is as hypothetical as ever, when it is considered as an object of reason. Let us leave it then respectfully to revelation, which is sufficient, or nothing can be so, to support it. Let us not employ our reason about things which

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she must either disown, or prostitute herself to maintain. Let us not employ her to multiply, or improve hypotheses. Let us employ her in a manner to want none: and that we shall do effectually, if we keep her within those bounds which God has prescribed, by revealing in his works so much and no more of natural theology, and of natural religion, as he thought it necessary for us to know.

These precautions are the more fit to be taken, because though our religion forbids pride, and teaches humility, yet the whole system of it tends to inspire the former into all those, who are not able to discern the consistency of particular precepts and of the system, which I presume that very few are. According to this system, man was not only made in the image of God, but the world and he were so made that his happiness seemed to be the final cause of the whole. He fell indeed from this state; but God, who suffered him to fall rather than to restrain him in the exercise of his free will, determined instantly to raise him again, by the sacrifice of his own Son: while he abandoned myriads of fallen angels to the fatal consequences of their revolt, without any hopes of redemption. Is it possible to conceive higher notions of a created being, than these revealed truths must inspire? Plato asserted, on his exalted notions of the Supreme Being, that immortality was communicated by a sort of physical necessity to every creature, that this Being himself created. Christian philosophers might be led

more easily from the exalted notions of human nature, which these revealed truths inspire, to imagine that happiness was to be communicated by a sort of moral necessity to such a creature as man. Allow me one instance more. The Israelites were one of the least, and least worthy nations of the Earth. Yet God chose them, according to the same system, by a wonderful predilection for his favourite people, preferred them to all the people of the Earth, and assigned them a country flowing with milk and honey. May not christian philosophers have been led by this example, to believe, that God preferred mankind to all other intellectual creatures, and made a particular world for them, as he assigned a particular country to the Israelites? The facts, though received in theology, are not, indeed, applicable to philosophy. But when the mind is once tinctured by them, and a habit contracted of reasoning from them, any thing, that appears analogous to them, will be the more easily admitted.

XLVI.

THE confederacy between atheists and divines appears to have been carried very far, by what has been said already. I have chosen in the reflections that have been made, to account for the physical and moral evil that is in the world, and to defend the attributes of God, to go up to the source of all the false reasoning about them, rather

rather than to insist on the topicks that are commonly employed: and I hope, that the method I have taken is not worse for being shorter, plainer, and less metaphysical. I must confess, that I do not see, how the cause of God can be effectually pleaded on this head any other way. But there is another head, on which it must be pleaded likewise; for the antitheistical confederacy does not end here. Lest the bare existence of evil should not afford the atheist colour enough to deny the being of God, nor the divine a sufficient foundation whereon to erect, by the seeming authority of reason, that system of another world, which is, and always has been, of great advantage to him in this, they proceed to consider these evils in the distribution of them. The supposed injustice of this distribution has been ever in their mouths a subject of accusation, not to say of invective, against the providence of God: and they have been heard with partiality of two kinds, that of love, and that of aversion, in their favour. The good that happens to themselves, and to those with whom they are intimately connected, by sentiment, by interest, and often by both, is an object of one partiality among men. The evil, that happens to these, is an object of the other. The order is reversed, when persons we disapprove, or who stand in opposition to our sentiments or interests, are concerned. We hate the good, and we love the evil that happens to them. Great advantage has been taken of these natural

dispositions to attack successfully the divine Providence in human opinion. But, here, indeed, the alliance between the atheist and the divine breaks off. The former concludes directly, that there is no God. The latter, after all he has done to favour this opinion indirectly, maintains still that there is one. How well the premises common to both, and their opposite conclusions are founded, let us examine. I fear that the atheist will appear, to that reason to which they both appeal, more consistent in his absurdity than the divine.

I think I have said, that artificial theology betrays the cause of God, how sincerely and how piously soever some of the professors of it may direct their intentions: and, if I have said so, I shall not recal my words. If these men had left the atheists to assert alone, both vainly and foolishly, that divine goodness required the world should be made for the sake of man, and that God could have no other motive to create him, except that of communicating happiness to him, they might have defended this goodness sufficiently, as I hope it has been shown, and the divine justice too, as I hope it will be shown. They would have had no aftergame to play, nor any contradictions to reconcile. The Stoicks would not have been obliged to deny that to be evil, which they and every one else felt to be evil; nor the Christians to rest their defence on this proposition, that the first designs of God were disappointed by the fall of man, which cannot be conceived

ceived by reason, and which the atheist will not admit on the authority of revelation, or rather of a moral, philosophical, Egyptian allegory. But when they reasoned on the same principles as the atheist reasoned, down to this conclusion exclusively, they left themselves no pretence for not concurring in the same conclusion but that of an hypothesis, and of an hypothesis which cannot, if it is admitted, effectually discharge the goodness, nor justice of God, at the tribunal of reason. Thus it seems plain to me, that they betray the cause of God; for they undermine it: and if the hypothesis fails, that truth which was raised on demonstration fails with it, or totters on so precarious a support.

To such a risk at least does artificial theology, as it is employed in this case, expose the first principle of all religion: and we may apply to the schools that teach it, what Aristo of Chios said of some schools of philosophy. As caution was to be used lest men should go debauched out of the school of Aristippus, or morose out of that of Zeno, so caution should be used lest men go infidels out of the schools of Christianity. A few reflections will show, that the risk I mention is not imaginary but very real. No doctrines were ever inculcated more strongly on the minds of men, nor enforced by more authority, than those of a future state. The institutors of religion, and the priests of these religions, were careful to establish and to maintain them in belief. They excited devotion, multiplied observances, and in-

creased offerings. By them, the religious society has governed principally in all ages*: and if the priests of Egypt undertook to conduct men in the way of the gods, in the difficult road, in the ineffable paths, and through the brazen gates that lead to the mansions of the blessed, we may quote priests in the pale of Christianity, at this time, who undertake to save men from Hell, to deliver them from Purgatory, and to conduct them to Heaven through the gates whereof St. Peter has the keys; as well as others, who make some of the same pretensions, and who scruple not to declare, that if this doctrine be taken away, all difference between good and bad is taken away, and there is no such thing as religion left. To this authority we must add that of legislators and magistrates, who have for political purposes authorised the same doctrines, solemnised them by religious institutions, like those of the Eleusinian mysteries, confirmed them by laws, and set education, the great nurse of theological opinions, on their side. These are great advantages, and yet we do not find that this doctrine ever had an effect suitable to them, or to the importance of it. Remote considerations, though they are believed, have not indeed the same influence that immediate objects have. But they have an influence proportionable to the belief of them: and they must have this influence, especially in a case like this, where the punishments held out are unavoidable, and no man can

* Euseb. Præp. Evan. L. 9, C. 10.

hope

hope, as every man does in all other cases, to escape them.

I do not say, that to believe a future state is to believe a vulgar errour; but this I say, it cannot be demonstrated by reason; it is not in the nature of it capable of demonstration, and no one ever returned that irremeable way to give us an assurance of the fact. It was, therefore, originally an hypothesis, and it may, therefore, be a vulgar errour. It was taken upon trust by the people who first adopted it, and made prevalent by art and industry among the vulgar, who never examine, till it came to be doubted, disputed, and denied, by such as did examine. It was made, like many other opinions that had no better foundations, subservient to philosophical systems and political institutions. It was advanced in answer to the great atheistical argument, drawn from the prosperity of wicked men. It was applied to enforce human laws, by divine and temporary rewards and punishments, by the fear of others more grievous and more lasting, to procure greater authority to governors, and more submission from the governed. It was communicated from Egypt, the mother of good policy as well as of superstition, to Greece. The luxuriant imaginations of that people improved it, and the Mythologia de inferis became a favourite theme of their poets, of Orpheus, of Homer, and so downward even to their dramatick writers. There seems likewise to have been a custom then, not very unlike to that which prevailed about two centuries ago in the

the Christian church generally, and much later, I believe, in Spain, the custom I ..an of acting mysteries. Such these representations were called by the heathens, and the same kind of religious fopperies retained the same name among the Christians.

But that which gave the greatest credit to this doctrine, and spread it most, was the authority of Homer and Plato. The former was gravely quoted by philosophers, as a philosopher, an historian, and a divine, and all as properly, no doubt, as the latter. The Romans took this doctrine and these mysteries from the Greeks; and the Greeks carried them back, when they conquered Asia and Egypt, to countries from whence they had received them. Homer and Plato were in the zenith of their glory at the time of Alexander's expedition, and they continued to be so in the reigns of his successors. Whether the Jews, who began about, or a little before this time, to have schools, and to engraft from foreign stocks on their own law, might not have taken the first hints of a future state from some of their neighbours, I know not. But it is most probable, that this doctrine was not known, or at least not taught among them, till the disputes in their schools gave a rise to the sects of Sadducees and Pharisees in their church. The most considerable persons, the richest, says Josephus, adhered to the Sadducees, who adhered so strictly to the law of Moses, that they could not admit a doctrine whereof there appeared no traces in it, and, therefore, denied

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the resurrection. The Pharisees or the Separatists, on the other hand, were ready to admit things marvellous in doctrine, and superstitious in practice; to reconcile them, if they could, to the written, or justify them to the oral law; for no expedient serves the purpose of innovators better than that of a blind tradition. All this was proper to strike the multitude; and the multitude followed the Pharisees. Thus the doctrine of a future state, and even of a transmigration of souls, slided into the system of Judaism before the coming of Christ: and yet they who adopted this doctrine then had no better authority for it than than of Egyptian priests, Greek poets, and Pythagorean and Platonick hypotheses.

True it is that the immortality of the soul, and future rewards and punishments, some parts of what philosophers and poets had imagined, were sanctified by revelation soon afterward. Thus sanctified, they deserve our respect, and challenge the implicit belief of every Christian. Thus, and thus alone, they are maintained in opinion, and not by the futile reasonings of divines, with which we have to do here. These are called demonstrations by the men who make them, and who triumph in them as if they were sufficient of themselves, and must convince by their own evidence. But the truth is, they would have little effect on the minds of men, if they did not pass for superabundant proofs of what is made certain by revelation, and if the respect that men pay to revelation did not screen these reasoners from being attacked

attacked so directly, and in so many ways as they would be otherwise, and as they deserve to be, for presuming to rest all religion, both natural and revealed, on their metaphysical refinements, and their abstract reasonings à priori.

The most zealous asserters of a Supreme Being, the warmest defenders of his Providence, and they who were the most persuaded of the necessity of a religion to preserve morality, and the good order of civil government, were far from this presumption. Some of them rather hoped than believed the immortality of the soul; and if they admitted a future state, they laughed at the old women's tales, the aniles fabulæ of a Hell and the furies. They either rejected the doctrine, or they admitted it by halves. It was not only problematical in the opinions of theistical philosophers, but it seems, in several instances, to have had but little hold on vulgar opinion, notwithstanding the means that had been used to inculcate it. One instance, and a remarkable one it is, shall be given. Tully*, in a publick pleading, wherein we may assure ourselves, that he was careful to let nothing fall, that might be an occasion of scandal, by contradicting and ridiculing the religious established opinions, speaking of Oppianicus, who had been condemned only to banishment, and, after saying that he should have killed himself, adds—"nam nunc quidem" (Oppianicus was then dead in his exile) "quid tandem illi mali

* Orat. pro A. Cluen.

"mors

" mors attulit? Nisi fortè ineptiis ac fabulis du-
" cimur, ut existimemus illum apud inferos im-
" piorum supplicia perferre . . . actum esse
" præcipitem in sceleratorum sedem atque regi-
" onem. Quæ si falsa sint, id quod omnes in-
" telligunt, quid ei tandem mors eripuit præter
" sensum doloris?"

The use I make of this deduction is to show, that the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, having been precariously established, and neither generally nor entirely believed, by those who believed the existence of God on better foundations, there is a real danger to this first principle of all religion, arising from the hypothesis against which I contend. Reason, experience, and self consciousness, prove to me, that a man may be thoroughly convinced that there is a Supreme and Self existent Being, of infinite power and wisdom; without subscribing to such notions of his moral attributes as divines would impose, or believe them any more capable than himself of determining, what these attributes required that God should do. But I can easily conceive, at the same time, that by eloquent discourses on the dignity of human nature, and the misery of human kind, by the cajolement of appeals to his passions and to his senses, this man may be induced to think, that the misery of mankind overbalances their happiness in general*; and that in particular the criminal have many times the lot

* Relig. of Nat. Delineated, pag. 205, and fol.

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of the innocent, and the innocent that of the criminal: from whence he may conclude, that God is an unjust and cruel Being, and deals unreasonably with his creatures, unless he has given them immortal souls, and there be another world wherein he makes proper amends to the good, at least for what they have suffered in this. The man is brought to the very brink of the precipice. He cannot believe a God unjust, cruel, unreasonable; but he may find it as difficult to believe a God who acts against his attributes, and the perfections of his nature, in one system, only to have a reason the more for acting agreeably to them in another. In a word, he may be led by theology, if he does not start back and revert to his former ways of thinking, from theism into atheism. Descartes and his followers have been justly censured for resisting the truth of God's existence, on their favourite proof, drawn from the idea which they assume, that the mind can frame of an All-perfect Being, and neglecting or even rejecting every other. Divines are justly liable to the same censure; for though they admit all the proofs that establish this great truth, yet they rest the validity of them ultimately on the hypothesis here mentioned, and expose such as cannot take this hypothesis for a demonstration to the danger of mistaking the demonstrations for hypotheses.

XLVII.

THIS danger, great as it is, appears to such a divine as Clarke, or is represented by him, to be none at all. He who does not believe the moral attributes of the Supreme Being to be just such as the doctor conceives them, and as essential to the divine nature as the natural attributes, has the doctor's consent to believe no God at all. This is the angular stone of artificial theology. Grant to the divine, that these attributes and the eternal reason of things are such as he conceives them to be, and he will raise whatever schemes he pleases of divine œconomy. He will show you what God was, and is obliged to do, as creator and governor of the world*, and what he must do to correct his first plan, to set the disorders and inequalities of it right, and to make the whole design appear at it's communication, what it does not appear at present, a design worthy of infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness. Refuse to grant what he assumes, and he proves nothing, with all his pomp of argument, and airs of demonstration. This profane application and impudent abuse of reason is grown so common, that they who are guilty of it do not perceive it to be what it is; and that every little smatterer in artificial theology, who clambers up into a pulpit, talks of the nature, attributes, and providence of

* Dem. 131.

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the Supreme, Ineffable, Incomprehensible Being, with such assurance as would be unpardonable presumption in angels and archangels themselves.

How should it be less? How should finite measure infinite? God's manner of knowing is ours no more than his manner of being. At least, I think, that one of these propositions may be reduced, as well as the other, to absurdity. But if his manner of knowing could be supposed, without absurdity, the same, would it not be still absurd to suppose the objects of omniscience as confined as the objects of human science? And yet they must be so, if the eternal reason of things, by which the Divine Wisdom conducts them all, be just the same as it appears to be to the understanding of every rational being, and if God appeals to man himself for his conduct toward man. When God communicates any knowledge to any of his creatures, it is such as he thinks necessary for them, and it is, therefore, communicated in a manner proportionable to their conceptions. Thus he has communicated to mankind in his works some knowledge of himself, more of the world they inhabit, and still more of their state, their duty, and their interest in it. What he has not given them the means of knowing, according to their manner of knowing, they are ignorant of: and, therefore, though the particular reasons and final causes of some few things relative to themselves, and to their system, are known to them, yet even these are in many more instances unknown, and the reasons relatively to God, for con-

constituting these and all other things as they are constituted, can be known to God alone, who sees them intuitively in himself, who is in himself the eternal reason. They cannot be objects of human understanding; for they are not conceivable by human ideas: and it is impossible to hear men with patience, when they endeavour to palm upon us, most impertinently, their notions of glory and honour for instance, and to make them pass for the motives that determine God.

We receive ideas from sensation and reflection, and we frame others by the several operations of our minds about these. Our minds have no other objects when they exercise the power of thinking, whatever that be. These ideas do not go far into the extent of being, nor our power of thinking, by consequence: and even in this extent, our most simple ideas are sometimes fallacious, our most complex ideas unsteady, and many of them imperfect and inadequate, confused and obscure. There is somewhat more. Our knowledge does not extend even to all our ideas. Let me borrow two examples from Mr. Locke. "We have the "ideas of a square, a circle, and equality, and "yet shall never be able, perhaps, to find a circle "equal to a square, and to know certainly that it "is so. We have the ideas of matter and think-"ing, but possibly shall never be able to know "whether any mere material being thinks or no." In like manner, and far more strongly, it may be said, that supposing us to have ideas of divine wisdom, goodness, and justice, there will be various

phænomena still, whereof we may have very clear and distinct ideas, and wherein we shall never be able to discover how wisdom coincides with goodness or justice, nor be able to make the application of the phænomena to the attributes. Thus the case would stand, supposing our ideas of these attributes in God, as adequate as our ideas of a square, a circle, equality, matter, and thought. But it grows much stronger, when we consider how inadequate our ideas of these attributes must necessarily be, not only on account of the infinite distance between the divine and human nature, but on account of the numberless, and to us unknown relations, respectively to all which the Divine Providence acts: which, if we did know them, we should be unable to compare, and in which, therefore, the harmony of divine perfections would not be discernible by us. Upon the whole matter, we may conclude, safely from errour, and in direct opposition to Clarke, that goodness and justice in God cannot be conceived, without manifest presumption and impiety, to be "the same as in the ideas we frame of these perfections, when we consider them in men, or "when we reason about them abstractly in themselves; but that in the Supreme Governor of "the world they are something transcendent, and "of which we cannot make any true judgment, "nor argue with any certainty about them."

Thus I think, and, if I wanted any authority to justify me, I could find it in Dr. Barrow, and in St. Paul, whom I quote rather as a theologian than

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an inspired apostle, since we consider this whole matter on principles of reason and not of revelation. The former begins his sermon, on a text taken from the Epistle of the latter to the Romans*, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! by observing, that when God rejected the greatest part of his ancient people, for their refusal to embrace the Gospel, and took the Gentiles into his favour; the advocates for Judaism argued against this proceeding, from their ideas of wisdom, as well as of justice, and the other moral attributes. "This proceeding, they said, argued his former affection to "them to have been misplaced. It impleaded his "ancient covenant, and law, of imperfection. "It supplanted his own designs. It unravelled all "that he had been doing for many ages." St. Paul answered the advocates of Judaism by other arguments, taken from "ideas of general equity, "of the nature of God, of his attributes, of his "relations to men, &c." But after he had steered his discourse through all these rocks, which, I presume, would have been such for Clarke, if they were such for St. Paul, "he thought it safe to "cast anchor, that is, to wind up the contest in "this modest intimation, that whatever he could "say might not perhaps exhaust the difficulty, "nor void all scruple; and that, therefore, in this, "and in all such cases, for entire satisfaction we "should have recourse to the incomprehensible

* C. 11, v. 33.

" wisdom of God, who frequently, in the course " of his Providence, ordereth things in methods " transcending our ability to discover or trace." St. Paul did not pretend, that his manner of accounting for rejecting the Jews and calling in the Gentiles was infallible demonstration, certain and necessary, even as certain as the attributes of God. Much less did he affirm, that if his arguments, concerning the dispensations of Providence, were not a demonstration, there was no demonstration of the being of God: and yet, surely, beside the difference between the apostle of the Gentiles and the minister of St. James's, it could not be harder to prove, that the rejection of the Jews, and the vocation of the Gentiles were consistent with the goodness and justice of God, than to prove, that a future state of rewards and punishments is necessary, to justify his attributes, and to render his dispensations in this world consistent with them.

Dr. Barrow proceeds to consider several reasons, why men cannot clearly discern the entire congruity of providential dispensations to the divine attributes, as he expresses himself in another place. He could not cut the knot at once, nor bring the same charge, as we have done, directly against the presumption of men of his own order. He was a divine, he was a preacher, he was to keep up the cant of the pulpit. He gives, therefore, some reasons of a prudential kind, which may have determined God to veil his face with a cloud, and to wrap up his power in some obscurity; such, for instance,

stance, as these, that he may not confound our weak sight, that he may exalt our faith, that he may appear God indeed, or that we may be well assured concerning a future account, and forced in our thoughts to recur thither for a re-solution of all emergent doubts and difficulties. Such flimsy stuff is a man like this obliged to vend, when he has put on a black gown and a band. But he lays his stress on another kind of reasoning, and such as is truly decisive. "As the dealings of very "wise," he says, and we may add, of very just and good men, "are sometimes founded on max-"ims, and admit justifications not obvious nor "penetrable by vulgar conceit, so may God act "according to rules of wisdom and justice, which "it may be quite impossible by our faculties to "apprehend, or with our means to descry. As "there are natural modes of being and operation ". . . . so there may be prudential and moral "rules of proceeding, far above our reach. . . . "peculiar objects of Divine Wisdom, and not to "be understood by any creature . . . . especi-"ally by creatures who stand in the lowest form "of intelligence, one remove from beasts . . . . "In fine, those rules of equity and experience, "which we in our transactions with one another "do use . . . . if they be applied to the dealings "of God, will be found very incongruous or defi-"cient, the case being vastly altered, from that in-"finite distance in nature and state between God "and us, and from the immense differences, which "his relations toward us have from our relations

" to one another." These two great divines are, you see, on my side. They are both of the same opinion that Clarke censures; and if his censures were as just as they are dogmatical, St. Paul himself would be one of those men, who take in reality the moral attributes of God entirely away, and who may on the same grounds deny his natural attributes*.

XLVIII.

It is time to have done with Clarke, especially since I leave this part of the argument in much better hands than my own, in those of Dr. Barrow and St. Paul, who deny to him the very principle, from which, as from a common source, all the accusations of Providence are deduced by him, by many other divines, and by the whole tribe of atheists. I proceed to take notice of another writer, and to examine another of those assumptions, which are employed by these men, whether divines or theists, to maintain their charge. That we are very incompetent judges of the moral attributes of God, and of the eternal reason of things; that it is unpardonable presumption in us, to pronounce what both or either of them required, that God should do in the original constitution of our system, or requires that he should do in the government of it; these truths, I say, are so evident, that he, who denies them, does not deserve

* Evid. p. 26.

to be argued against any longer. "Quæ perspi-
"cua sunt longa esse non debent." The determination of them should in reason determine the whole dispute. Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Power have made things as they are: how goodness and justice required that they should be made, is neither coram judice, nor to any rational purpose to inquire. For greater satisfaction, however, it may not be amiss to show, that neither the state of mankind in this life, in general, nor the lot of good and bad men, in particular, are such as have been represented, to serve the purposes of some persons; and that if they were such, the hypothesis of a life to come would not restore, by reason, the goodness and justice, which these men endeavour to destroy by appeals to reason and to passion.

The solemn author of the Religion of Nature Delineated, whom Clarke had in his eye, perhaps, when he described his fourth sort of theists, whether this treatise had been then published or not, places himself on the same bench with Minos. Minos was the son of Jupiter, and the disciple of his father. So Plato calls him, in order to insinuate, as I believe, that nothing less than the wisdom of the Supreme Being was sufficient for the task assigned to this infernal judge. But I think, on recollection, that I must recal my words, and say, that Wollaston places himself far above Minos. He judges God as well as man. Departed souls appear at the tribunal of the other, where they are punished for the evil they have

done, or recompensed for the evil they have suffered, in this world. But he erects this court of judicature; establishes the general laws of it, as he judges the perfections of the divine nature required that they should be established; and distinguishes and weighs the kinds of happiness or misery, that fall to the share of different men. Clear and mixed happiness, avoidable and unavoidable misery in the whole, or avoidable so far, that the creature would choose rather to bear the remainder than miss the proportion of happiness: all which must come into consideration with the good and the evil men have done, at that judgment seat, where they are to be tried after death for what they have done in life.

In his attempt to prove, from the nature of an All-perfect Being, that God created the human soul immortal, because the mortality of it does not consist with reason, this author has the temerity to assert, that he, who says the contrary, must say in consequence either that God is unreasonable, unjust*, and cruel, or that no man has a greater share of misery unavoidable than of happiness. Nay, further, the existence of an All-perfect Being depends so much, according to this theist, on the hypothesis of a future state†, that one single instance of unfortunate virtue and of prosperous wickedness in this world would be to him a sufficient argument for such a state. His reason is, that God cannot be unjust nor unrea-

* P. 200. † P. 205.

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unreasonable in any one instance, which is undoubtedly true. But on this supposition he would be so in one instance, if there was no future state. One instance of these kinds, therefore, would have been to Wollaston a demonstration against the existence of an All-perfect Being, without the hypothesis of such a state. This is strange theism. Artificial theology is neither more dogmatical, nor more absurd: and the belief of God's existence hangs by a twine in both.

To support this hypothesis, he gives a most exaggerated description of the misfortunes to which particular men are liable in this world, and a very ridiculous as well as exaggerated description of the general and usual state of mankind; both which are assumed to be inconsistent with the idea of a reasonable cause. Let us consider the last first, as the natural order seems to require. While the Clarkes and Wollastons of the age accuse the Providence of God, by arguments drawn from his nature, and from the eternal reason of things, both as imperfectly known to them as to you and me; let us defend this Providence, by arguments drawn from the nature of man, and the actual constitutions of the world, both equally well known to them and to us. Instead of hearkening to them, let us hearken to God, who speaks to us in his works; and instead of pronouncing what it was right for him to do, believe all he has done, for that very reason, right. Let us be prepared to meet with several appearances, which we cannot explain, nor therefore reconcile to the ideas we endeavour to form of the divine perfections.

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But let us remember too, that as the pretended science of the men, against whom we dispute, exposes them to errour, and as they render the great truths of theism doubtful, or at least perplexed, by blending them up in an imaginary scheme of divine œconomy; so we may be secure from errour by a modest avowal of ignorance, where human knowledge ceases: and as the imperfections of created beings proves them to be created, not selfexistent, so the very deficiencies of the knowledge we have will be so many proofs of it's truth. They must be necessarily such; for if it be true, that infinite wisdom and infinite power created and govern the universe, it cannot but follow, that some of the phænomena may be proportionable, and that others may be disproportionable to our and to every other finite understanding.

XLIX.

HAVING premised what I thought proper in this place, I observe, that the representation made of the general state of mankind proves nothing, or proves too much. It proves nothing if a gradation of animal beings appeared necessary or fit in the divine ideas, that is, to speak less Platonically and more rationally, to the supreme or divine reason or intention; for in that case why should not we be the creatures we are? It proves or attempts to prove too much, if it be intended to prove, that there is, or that there should have been no such chain of being; for as we see that

that there is one almost from nonentity up to man, and have the most probable reasons to persuade us, that it continues up to natures infinitely below the divine, but vastly superior to human; so there is surely no metaphysical nor theological presumption mad enough to assert, that we are capable of knowing what the constitution, order, and harmony of a universe require.

But now, whether such a gradation of being goes through the whole universe, or whether it be confined to our planet and stops at man, as the ignorance and pride of ancient philosophers induced them to believe, why is not the general state of mankind consistent with the idea of a reasonable cause? This reasonable cause may have produced such creatures as we are, either relatively to that chain, whereof we make a necessary link, or independently of it, and on other motives at which it is impossible we should even guess. When objections are made to such things as appear inconsistent with the perfections of an all-perfect Being in the Bible, the divine's answer is that of St. Paul, "O altitudo!" The same divine objects to the works of God, and will not be answered by the same exclamations. My ignorance is made a sufficient reason for submitting implicitly to whatever I find in this book, as agreeable to the perfections of the Deity; and yet my ignorance is not allowed to be a reason for submitting in the same manner to whatever I find in the book of nature, that God has actually done, as agreeable to these perfections This may be called very justly theological effrontery

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in the divine; and it is at least as absurd in the theist to ask, whether the conditions of humanity, the various objects which men pursue, and the various scenes of their lives, from the cradle to the grave, compose an end worthy a first Cause perfectly reasonable. The learned author might have asked with far less impropriety, whether the lowest employments, to which legislators and magistrates subject some of the persons they govern in political societies, compose an end worthy of them. The answer would be, that, considered by themselves, they do not, but that considered as parts of a general system, wherein the most minute are necessary to make the whole complete, they do: and even considered by themselves, they are worthy at least of the persons to whom they are assigned.

In what I have written to you about human knowledge, I have insisted on one observation, which I will recal, and apply to the present case. The present case will justify the observation, and both together will discover very clearly the principal source from which all the perplexity, and all the tedious disputes concerning the origin of evil, and the supposed unjust dispensations of Providence, as well as most other metaphysical and indeterminable questions, have arisen. The synthetical method of reasoning by arguments à priori, that is by arguments deduced from principles assumed to be evident, is very commodious for many philosophical and theological purposes. But it may lead us imperceptibly into errour, and

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we can never be sure that it leads us to truth, unless these principles are selfevident, or unless their evidence be demonstrated by the analytical method; that is, by arguments à posteriori, that is, by tracing it up from the known phænomena. Now, it happens unfortunately for truth, that philosophers and divines catch at certain principles through levity, through a too implicit confidence, or through design, and argue dogmatically from them in the synthetical method, without a due regard to the analytical. Thus, for instance, the wisdom of God does not appear alike in all the phænomena; but, as far as we can discover, it appears in the greatest and the least to our astonishment, and the proofs of it multiply in an exact proportion to our discoveries, while no one of these can be strained into a repugnancy to it, for if any of them could, the case would be altered extremely. This wisdom, therefore, is established by the analytical method, and we may reason safely from our ideas of it in the synthetical. But the same cannot be said of the moral attributes, which we ascribe to the Supreme Being, according to our ideas of them. The superiority we have over the rest of animals, that are our fellow inhabitants of this world, which is imaginary, perhaps, in some respects, and real without doubt, on the whole, and several particular phænomena, wherein virtue is rewarded and vice punished, give us these ideas. Now, whether the phænomena that give them, even those wherein the final causes are the most apparent, and the

the most immediately relative to man, are to be deemed effects of the divine goodness and justice, in any other sense than some of the same and and several others are to be deemed effects of the divine goodness to the several species of animals; or whether they are all effects of the divine wisdom, exerting itself in every part relatively to the whole, may be disputed. But it cannot be disputed, and all sides agree, that many of the phænomena are repugnant to these ideas of goodness and justice. They, therefore, who proceed on these principles, that goodness in God is just what we conceive it to be in our dealings with one another and in our abstract notions of it, and that his justice is the same, that he made the world for the sake of man, that he made man only to communicate happiness to him, and that every one, who acts in contradiction to this happiness, must be rigorously punished by God himself, are so far from demonstrating, that they have not the merit of framing a good hypothesis; since no hypothesis, which is contradicted evidently by any one of the phænomena, can be received as such; and since it is in vain that they endeavour to rectify one by another, and to maintain the second by the very proofs that destroy the first. If the first fails, the second cannot stand: and he who expects to be believed, when he asserts what the phænomena can neither depose for nor against, because he finds no other way to maintain what he had asserted in opposition to them,

them, expects a great deal more than reason will grant him.

What has been said seems to be extremely plain: and they would conclude in this manner on any other occasion, who are not ashamed to do the very contrary on this. By setting themselves free from the restraints of the analytical method, these reasoners à priori resemble very much one sort of madmen. Some of these are so very mad, that they lose all use of their reason, and are as little able to deduce consequences, as they are to establish principles. Others, again, deduce consequences, and argue very justly, but are still mad; because they reason from principles that have no appearance of reality out of their own overheated and disordered imaginations. You will find instances of this kind without the trouble of going to Bedlam. You will find them in every form of life, even among those who are reputed sober and wise, and who really are so, except on some one particular subject. But you will find them principally in colleges and schools, where different sects have rendered this sort of madness, which is occasional elsewhere, both epidemical and traditional. Few have been mad like Don Quixote, while multitudes have been and are as mad, in different walks of science, as the Danish cabalist who instructed Borri. The man had great parts, was learned, was devout. He reasoned extremely well; but he reasoned like the rest of his sect, on the supposition of an elementary people and on other

other cabalistical principles. Atheists seem to me to deserve a place among the first sort of madmen, and I apprehend that many divines and theists ought to be ranked among the second.

They, who approach the charm, are exposed to the enchantment. How should they escape, who are bred up in it? I call it an enchantment, and I think, that men who have great strength of genius, and great warmth of imagination, are the most likely to be affected by it. The analytical method is the surest road to truth, but it suits neither the purpose nor the temper of such philosophers. Where it may carry them they know not. It will carry them to truth, if it be well pursued, but it may carry them to truth, that is inconsistent with the doctrines they are engaged by prejudice or interest to maintain; and accordingly we see them fly off from it, like men who are afraid of their guide. It is troublesome and tedious; for it requires often a difficult and long induction of particulars: and they are in haste to arrive at science, or what they take for science. It stops in many cases short, and disappoints their curiosity. They scorn to stop where it stops; and therefore they take a bold leap from certain ideas, that seem to them clear and distinct, to the first principles of things, as Fontenelle says of des Cartes, foolishly to be sure, since he intended to make his panegyrick, and to give him the preference to Newton.

All this may be applied to the persons we speak of here; and there is no subject, on which the enchantment

enchantment has had so much force, nor has prevailed so long, as on this of the origin of evil, of the moral attributes of God, and of the dispensations of Providence. This was a chaos of metaphysical notions three thousand years ago, and it is so still. Some very able writers have endeavoured to account for the origin of evil consistently with the received notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his design in creating man; but I doubt that the two famous questions are still unanswered by them. "If there "is a God infinitely good as well as powerful, "how comes it, that there is any such thing as "evil in the world? If he is infinitely just, how "comes it that the virtuous have a share and "sometimes the greatest of this evil?" The hypothesis of two principles, which had been invented by the most ancient of the eastern philosophers, and was revived by Manes and others, contained many absurdities, and did not solve the difficulty, since it might be asked why did the good God create man at all, if he could not create and govern him independently of the evil god? The hypothesis of the fall of man, for such it is under a philosophical consideration, will serve the purpose as little; since it is impossible to render that assumed indulgence of God to the free will of man, which defeated the original design of God, plunged man into a state of misery as soon as he was created, and obliged the divine goodness to have recourse to the expedient of a redemption by the blood of his own Son—

since it is impossible, I say, to render this agreeable to our ideas of goodness, or even of wisdom.

The first of these hypotheses has been exploded long ago. The second must be defended as well as it can, since it is made the foundation of the christian system. But, however the introduction of evil may be accounted for by this sacred tradition, and by much ingenious argumentation to the reason of mankind; every divine, and several theists, endeavour to account for the existence and distribution of it by another hypothesis, which is as ancient as either of the former, and which must have been invented, since it was not revealed to the Egyptians, and other people, any more than to the Israelites, not only for a political, but for a philosophical purpose, and to serve for an answer to the two atheistical questions. It is with this hypothesis, considered independently of revelation, that we have to do here. We are to examine whether it reconciles the phænomena to the ideas we have of goodness and justice, by assuming, that this world is nothing more than the porch or entry into another*.

L.

As the men who maintain this hypothesis neglect the phænomena when they pretend to determine the moral attributes of God, so they overstrain them with much affectation and unfairness

* Rel. of Nat. p. 207.

when

when they pretend to demonstrate a future state. The author of the Religion of Nature Delineated, that I may mention one particularly, does this in such a manner, that his exaggerations become burlesque*. According to him, "the general state "of mankind is scarce consistent with the idea of "a reasonable cause, because we are born with "the labour of our mothers; because we are liable to hunger, thirst, cold, and indispositions of "various kinds; and because one generation "drops off, and another springs up, that is, because as we are born, so we die. Children, we "trifle away our time at play; or we are sent to "school, and submitted to discipline. Men, we "are exposed to difficulties, and surrounded with "cares. There are inhuman or vicious husbands, "false or peevish wives, refractory or unhappy "children. Many can never obtain a comfortable livelihood; many of those that do, break; "and even when their affairs go on prosperously, "their families increase, and new occasions of solicitude are introduced by this increase. Under "such grievances we lie during the best part of "life, and when we grow old we grow infirm. In "short, physical and moral evil, intermixed with a "few transitory and uncertain enjoyments, not "worth enjoying, make up the whole system of "our lives, at the last stage of which, if we are "not taken away sooner by death, fainting, tottering, and bending to the earth, we fall into

* Ib p. 206, 207, 209.

" the grave of ourselves." Such, and far more miserable, (for I omit among others those who labour under incurable distempers, and who subsist by begging, borrowing, or shifts as bad as these) is the state of mankind represented to be; after which the pathetick writer concludes, "and " must man end here? Is this the period of his be- " ing? Is this all?" The author I quote is so transported by the torrent of his eloquence, and by such reflections as these, that he raises in his own mind what I think he will raise in that of no sober reader, a sort of indignation against the state wherein Almighty God has placed us, and against the order of his Providence. On this he grounds an expectation of life and immortality in a better state, and, on this expectation, an argument that there will be such a state.

In this rapture he retires to some solitary walk, and there far from noise, perhaps, but certainly not free from prejudice, he meditates for our instruction. " He thinks himself sure, that he is " above lifeless matter, above the vegetative tribe, " and above the sensitive animals that he sees. " He has not only immediate sensations, but " ideas of a higher order. He can make excur- " sions into futurity; he had almost said, that he " could, by strict thinking, get into another world " beforehand. Can he be made capable of such " great expectations only to be disappointed at " last? Can he have such overtures of immor- " tality, if, after all, there is no such thing? He " makes great improvements in knowledge, which

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" he has often no opportunity of showing here. " Must they not be preparations for another " world, wherein he may show them? Can the " author of his reasoning faculties be himself " so unreasonable as to give them to no purpose? " By the exaltation of his reason, and by the " practice of virtue, he approaches to a higher " manner of being, and tastes already something " spiritual, and above this world. Must his pri- " vate acts of religion be all lost? Can God " have so little regard for him, who has so much " for God?"

In this specimen, which is very faithfully extracted, we have an example of the second sort of madness mentioned above. The man who writ all this nonsense was a man of parts, of learning, a philosopher, and a geometrician. But he made one mistake in the delirium of metaphysicks. Instead of reasoning about a creature of God's, he reasoned about one of his own creation. When these learned lunaticks conceive men to be nearly what they are, they pull down the divinity nearly to the same level, and frame their notions of God's proceedings with them on those of their proceedings with one another. When they think more worthily of the Supreme Being, and raise their ideas of an all-perfect nature as high as they are able, they raise their ideas of the human nature in a certain proportion to these; so that God and man are, in all their reasonings, within degrees of comparison. Thus Mr. Wollaston has done in his truths relating to the Deity, and in

those relating to a private man. He raises our conceptions in the first, as high as they can be raised, and then loses himself, and leaves his reader to be lost, in the incomprehensibility of the divine nature, as they must needs be. He does not, indeed, flatter the human in the second as grossly as some writers, who endeavour to impose on us against the intuitive knowledge which every one may have of himself; but he insists so much on the spirituality and immortality of the soul, and on the unsuitableness of the condition to the importance of mankind, that he gives ground sufficient to stand upon to those fulsome panegyrists of humanity, who consider them as the image of God, the final cause of the creation, and the principal object among created beings, even above angels, of the divine care and solicitude.

But, after all their endeavours to make of man a being superior to the whole animal kind, rather than a superior species of the same kind, man will appear what he really is to every unprejudiced mind. In vain will they endeavour to persuade any such, that the natural state of mankind is unnatural, if I may say so; that is, a state neither agreeable to the nature of God himself, nor to that nature wherewith he has dignified man. In vain will they endeavour to persuade any such, that the conditions of humanity are imperfections in the system; and that, in the works of God, as in those of men, whatever falls short of the idea of the workman, or is not proportionate to the value of the materials he prepares in one essay,

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may be rectified in another instance. It is not only true, but obvious, that man is connected by his nature, and, therefore, by the design of the Author of all nature, with the whole tribe of animals, and so closely with some of them, that the distance between his intellectual faculties and theirs, which constitutes as really, though not so sensibly as figure, the difference of species, appears, in many instances, small, and would probably appear still less, if we had the means of knowing their motives, as we have of observing their actions. The connection of all animal, and, by consequence, of human with vegetable life is more remote. But there is such a connection; and it will be manifest to him who considers how vegetables are produced, how they grow up, how they ripen, flourish for a time, wither and die; how many wants they have, such as nourishment, culture and shelter, for instance, as well as to how many distempers and injuries they are exposed, in all which circumstances their connection with the animal kind is too apparent to be denied. Though man is an animated material, being capable of beginning motion, and of many other modifications of thought, both single and in series; yet, however these mental powers were communicated to him, and in degrees still more imperfect to other animals, his system and theirs are founded alike in mere matter; and when we look at one another, the first ideas we receive are those of extension and figure, the parts of which, like those of any other clod of earth, are liable to

separation, and to a dissolution of the form. Nay, there is a further analogy between animated and inanimated bodies. The former have, by instinct, a sort of moral gravitation to one another, by which they adhere together in society. I will not apply instinct to the latter; but this I may say, that a force as unknown as instinct produces a gravitation of the several parts of matter to each other, and keeps them together in a kind of physical society.

The whole world, nay the whole universe is filled with beings, which are all connected in one immense design. The sensitive inhabitants of our globe, like the dramatis personæ, have different characters, and are applied to different purposes of action in every scene. The several parts of the material world, like the machines of a theatre, were contrived not for the actors, but for the action: and the whole order and system of the drama would be disordered and spoiled, if any alteration was made in either. The nature of every creature, his manner of being, is adapted to his state here, to the place he is to inhabit, and, as we may say, to the part he is to act. If man was a creature inferior or superior to what he is, he would be a very preposterous creature in this system. Gulliver's horses made a very absurd figure in the place of men, and men would make one as absurd in the place of horses. I do not think that philosophers have shown in every instance why every thing is what it is, and as it is, or that nothing could be in any one case otherwise than

than it is, without producing a greater inconveniency to the whole than the particular inconveniency that would be removed. But I am sure this has been proved in so many instances, that it is trifling, as well as profane, to deny it in any. We complain often of our senses, and sometimes of our reasoning faculties. Both are defective, weak, fallible: and yet, if the former were more extensive, more acute, and more nice, they would not answer the purposes of human life, they would be absolutely inconsistent with them. Just so, if our reasoning faculties were more perfect than they are, the order of intellectual beings would be broken unnecessarily, and man would be raised above his proper form, without any real advantage to himself, since the reason he has is sufficient for him in the state allotted to him; and since higher faculties, and greater degrees of knowledge, would on one hand increase his presumption, and yet on the other would rather excite than sate his curiosity, by showing him more clearly the extent of his ignorance.

Wollaston pretends to reduce every one, who does not adopt the hypothesis of rewards and punishments in a future state, to this dilemma: "no "rational creature is unavoidably miserable, or "God is an unreasonable and cruel being." But, in the first place, who told this writer, or how does he know, that there are any rational creatures unavoidably miserable? The whole story of mankind tells him so, and his own senses show him that it is so, and on these supposed authorities he

be makes such a state of misery to be that of almost all mankind. I might have said of all mankind absolutely: for though he allows that some are more and some are less miserable than others; yet in the enumeration he makes of unavoidable human miseries he includes many that are unavoidable indeed, but that do not constitute misery, either when they come separately, or when several of them come together. They are inconveniencies at most, to which every man is liable. Every man is liable to catch cold, and, like other animals, to be afflicted with other bodily distempers. Every man, and he most, who is deemed commonly to be the furthest removed from misery, is exposed to cares, to troubles, to disappointments, &c. Our author is fond, on this occasion, of the word misery, it carries a stronger idea along with it, and serves the purpose of exaggeration better. But what is misery? Let us, who have no other purpose to serve than that of truth, determine our ideas with greater precision. As I take happiness to be a continued permanent series of agreeable sensations or of pleasure, so I take misery to be a continued permanent series of the contrary: and such misery has never been brought, I believe, on any man necessarily, and unavoidably, as a consequence of the general state wherein God has placed mankind.

Particular occasional evils, physical and moral, are consequences of this state, no doubt, and such as we are able to show that they could not be prevented in the best of all material systems.

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The course of things rolls on through a vast variety of contingent events, for such they are to our apprehensions, according to the first impression of motion given to it, and under the direction of a universal Providence. This perpetual flux, and the vicissitudes it creates, in what we call the fortune of men, bring along with them both good and evil. Human life is checkered variously with both; and as the good has often some alloy, so the evil is softened by many circumstances, even by habit, and above all, by hope, that cordial drop, which sweetens every bitter potion, even the last.

The saying of the Epicureans is true of all sorts of evil. If it is violent, it spends itself, or it puts an end soon to him who suffers it. If it is moderate, it is tolerable, it may be compensated, or the sense of it may wear out. Thus a dancing, drunken, smoking revel, makes ample amends to the savage for all the wants he has suffered, and for all the pains and perils, to which he has been exposed. Thus the galley-slave sings while he is chained to an oar, and thus might they sing who worked in the golden mines of the Upper Egypt, and for whom as well as their relations and poor children Mr. Wollaston is moved to so much compassion. I should wonder, when he was in Egypt, that he did not quote a tradition from the Bible, as well as from Diodorus, if I did not consider, that he gave probably more credit to the profane than to the sacred history, and lament the fate of the Israelites, who were obliged to make bricks without straw,

straw, and whose backs were scourged by their taskmasters. The real evils, that men suffer, are not in truth so great as they appear in these exaggerated representations of them, and very often perhaps to the eye of a spectator: nay, the greatest of them are not greater than those, which men impose voluntarily on themselves, while they complain loudly of evils far less, which the conditions of humanity impose on them. I might bring examples from those who row in gallies, or dig in mines, for hire; from those who condemn themselves to pass their whole lives in austerities like the fathers of la Trappe, or in torments, like the faquirs of the East, on motives of superstition; from those in whom a turn of imagination can take off the fear of death, and make them court it before it's time, like the followers of Odin, who sung the praise of it in their hymns, witness the ode of good king Lodbrog; and had no better a reason for it than the hope of drinking beer in the sculls of their enemies at the palace of Odin.

Thus do men frequently embrace, by choice, the very evils they complain of, when they happen to them in the usual course of things; and sometimes even death itself, for which they have, by nature, the strongest aversion. Thus too they devote their whole lives to real and constant misery, which is no part of the general natural state of mankind. In short, their greatest evils are from themselves, not from God, which might be shown in innumerable instances. True it is, that they

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are sometimes involved in general calamities, which they can neither foresee nor prevent, such as inundations, earthquakes, pestilences, and the entire devastations of kingdoms or provinces by barbarous people, like the Huns of old, or the Spaniards in latter ages. But these calamities are rare. They may be considered as chastisements; for chastisements are reasonable, when there are any to be amended by partaking in them, or by being, at least, spectators of them. They may be considered as the mere effects, natural though contingent, of matter and motion in a material system, put into motion under certain general laws. If they are seen in the first light, they should teach mankind to adore and to fear that Providence, which governs the world by particular as well as general dispensations. If they are seen in the second, they should suggest some other reflections, which are not without their utility neither.

Necessary agents employ all their powers conformably to the laws of nature, in promoting the same end, that is, in carrying on the physical system. So rational agents should employ all their faculties in preserving the order of the moral system, which reason discovers to be their common duty, and reason and experience to be their common interest. There are great deviations in both, with a double difference relatively to the state of mankind. The former are wholly independent, the latter in great measure dependent on man, notwithstanding the strength of his passions, and the weakness of his reason. The former

mer are not only rare, and the latter frequent; but the consequences of the latter become much more fatal to the happiness of mankind in general, than those of the former. From hence it results very evidently, that the wisdom of God, which you may call his goodness, has given man, by what is in his power, very ample means to make himself amends for that which is out of his power. Atheists and divines find fault with the whole. They cannot, or they will not conceive, that the seeming imperfection of the parts is necessary to the real perfection of the whole. The entire scheme of the works of God must be altered to please them. Nothing, even inconvenient to these delicate persons, must be suffered in it. They must be physically invulnerable, and morally impeccable, or the Divine Providence must interpose continually to shield every particular man from evils of one sort, and to check him, like the dæmon of Socrates, when he is about to commit those of another. This is all they modestly require; and of the want of this they complain perpetually, as they pretend, the divine at least does so, that they have a right to do, because God appeals to man for the equity of his proceedings.

Let us be convinced, however, in opposition to atheists and divines, that the general state of mankind in the present scheme of Providence is a state not only tolerable, but happy. Without having Wollaston's balance, wherein he weighs happiness and misery even to grains and scruples,

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we may pronounce, that there is much more good than evil in it; and prove what we pronounce, even by his authority, and that of all those who deny it like him, if any such authority can be wanting. It is plain, that every man has more good than evil in actual enjoyment, or in prospect, since every man prefers existing as he is to nonexistence; and since none of them, not those who suffer the worst accidents in life, are willing to abandon it, and to go out of the state these declaimers represent to be so miserable. The proposition may be advanced thus generally, because there are very few examples to the contrary, and those are of men run mad by distemper, or made so by some prevailing enthusiasm. Neither will it avail to say, that the desire of life and the fear of death are, one the greatest imperfection, and the other the greatest evil of our human state; since, whatever they are, and from whencesoever they arise, they would lessen in all cases, and cease in many, if the condition of mankind were truly such as it is represented. What our author's circumstances were of any kind I am ignorant. But whatever they were, I am persuaded, you will be of my opinion, that any charitable person, who had offered to cut his throat, in order only to deliver him from the miseries he complained of in such lamentable terms, would have been very ill received. But I haste to wind up and to conclude the hints, for they are no more, which occur to me, and which I think proper to give you concerning the general and usual state of mankind.

LI.

I SAY then, that if men come helpless into the world like other animals; if they require even longer than other animals to be nursed and educated by the tender instinct of their parents, and if they are able much later to provide for themselves; it is because they have more to learn and more to do; it is because they are prepared for a more improved state and for greater happiness. Sense and instinct direct all animals to their several ends. Some of them profit more by experience, acquire more knowledge, and think and reason better than others both in different species and the same. Man is at the head of these; he profits still more by experience, he acquires still more knowledge, he thinks and reasons better than all other animals; for he who is born too stupid to do so is not a human creature; he sinks into an inferior species, though he be made after the image of man. Man is able, by his intellectual superiority, to foresee, and to provide more effectually against the evils that threaten him, as well as to procure to himself the necessaries, the comforts, and the pleasures of life. All his natural wants are easily supplied, and God has proportioned them to the abilities of those who remain in the lowest form of rational creatures. The Tartar, under his tent, and the savage, in his hut, enjoys them. Such is the general state of mankind.

mankind. Of what then do we complain? His happiness exceeds that of his fellow creatures, at least as much as the dignity of his nature exceeds the dignity of theirs: and is not this enough?

We ought to think, that it is enough: and yet God has done more for us. He has made us happy, and he has put it into our power to make ourselves happier by a due use of our reason, which leads us to the practice of moral virtue, and of all the duties of society. We are designed to be social, not solitary creatures. Mutual wants unite us: and natural benevolence and political order, on which our happiness depends, are founded in them. This is the law of our nature; and though every man is not able for different reasons to discern it, or, discerning it, to apply it, yet so many are able to do this, that they serve as guides to the rest. The rest submit for the advantages they find in this submission. They learn by experience, that servitude to law is real liberty, and that the regulation of pleasure is real happiness. Pleasures are objects of self love, happiness that of reason. Reason is so far from depriving us of the first, that happiness consists in a series of them: and and as this can be neither attained nor enjoyed securely out of society, a due use of our reason makes social and self love coincide, or even become in effect the same. The condition wherein we are born and bred, the very condition so much complained of, prepares us for this coincidence, the foundation of all human happiness; and our whole nature, appetite, passion, and

reason concur to promote it. As our parents loved themselves in us, so we love ourselves in our children, and in those to whom we are most nearly related by blood. Thus far instinct improves self love. Reason improves it further. We love ourselves in our neighbours, and in our friends too, with Tully's leave; for if friendship is formed by a kind of sympathy, it is cultivated by good offices. Reason proceeds. We love ourselves in loving the political body whose members we are, and we love ourselves when we extend our benevolence to all mankind.

These are the genuine effects of reason, these are the purposes for which it was given us, and nothing more trifling, nor more absurd, can be found in the writings of those who have presumed to censure the providence of God, than what Tully puts into the mouth of Cotta, in the third book of the Nature of the Gods, on this occasion. "I know not," is this pontiff made to say, "whether it had not been better for mankind, to have "had no reasoning faculties at all, since they "are hurtful to so many, and profitable to so few, "than to have had them so bountifully and so "profusely bestowed*." Foolish and profane! Fire serves for several necessary uses, among the rest to warm us, and sensitive experience teaches us to distinguish between warming and burning,

* Haud scio an melius fuerit humano generi motum istum celerem cogitationis, acumen, solertiam, quam rationem vocamus, quoniam pestifera sit multis, admodum paucis salutaris, non dari omnino, quam tam munificè, et tam largè dari

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in the manner and degree wherein we employ it. Shall we renounce the use of it, and complain that there is such an element, because it burns us when we employ it ill, or when we neglect, in employing it well, the precautions and attentions that are necessary? Just so (for we may transfer this material image to an intellectual subject, much more properly than such images are usually transferred to such subjects by metaphysicians) just so, I say, human reason is given for several necessary uses, and principally to lead us to all the happiness we are made capable of attaining, by a proper application of it, which rational experience is sufficient to teach us. This comparison is more just than that which Cotta makes, and Bayle has copied, of the Supreme Being to a physician, who prescribes wine to a patient that he knows will drink it too strong, and perish by the use of it. Neither the strength of our reason, nor the too frequent use of it, but the contrary are to be apprehended: and if the sick man's wine must be mingled with water to do him good, reason, the medicina animi, must be employed pure and unmixed. The other similes, which these academicians employ, are as impertinent as this, and might be shown very easily to be so, if it were worth our while. But no man, who is not already devoid of reason, will be induced by them to renounce this noble gift, wherein the dignity of our nature consists, because it becomes hurtful when we apply it ill; or through negligence, or through affectation, or through

design, even when we apply it well. It was applied rather impertinently than hurtfully, to maintain stoical apathy; for it was not given to destroy, but to direct and govern the passions; to make them as beneficial as they are necessary in the human system; to make a Piso of a Catiline*, and a Brutus, I mean the first, of a Cæsar. But it was applied very hurtfully, indeed, and it is so still, by those who employ all the reason they have to corrupt the morals of men, to bribe, to seduce, to argue, to deceive, or to force them out of their properties, or their liberties, and to make a whole community become the vassals of a faction of men, or of one man. This in politicks. In religion it was applied very hurtfully, and it is so still by atheists and divines, while the former endeavour by sophism and declamation to censure the works of God, and the order of his providence, to destroy the belief of his existence, and to banish all sense of religion; and while the latter, who join very heartily in the same censure, would be thought to justify the divine attributes against the common accusation, and to promote the interests of religion by this justification.

A most unnecessary justification surely! if they did not make it necessary; since God leads us by the natural state, in which we stand at first, into the road of happiness, and leaves us to the conduct of a sufficient guide, that is, of our

* Frugi.

reason

reason afterward. It would be false to say, as Seneca says, somewhere, in one of the rants of the Portick, that we owe our virtue to ourselves, not to God. It would be equally false to say, that we owe our happiness to ourselves, not to God. But this may be said with truth, that God, when he gave us reason, left us to our free will to make a proper or improper use of it: so that we are obliged to our Creator for a certain rule and sufficient means of arriving at happiness, and have none to blame but ourselves, when we fail of it. It is not reason, but perverse will, that makes us fall short of attainable happiness. The rule is so certain, the means so sufficient, that they who deviate from them are selfcondemned at the time they do so; for he, who breaks the laws of nature, or of his country, will concur to preserve them inviolate from others. As a member of society, he acknowledges the general rule. As an individual, he endeavours to be a particular exception to it. He is determined in both cases by self love. That active principle, inflaming and inflamed by his passions, presses on to the apparent good, which is the object of them: and if reason, a less active principle, which, instead of impelling, requires to be impelled, and to whom it belongs to be consulted in the choice, as well as in the pursuit of an object, is called in, it is called in too late, and is made the drudge of the will, predetermined by passion. Thus it happens, that self love and social are divided, and

in opposition to one another in the conduct of particular men, while, in the making laws, and in the regulation of government, they continue to be the same. As long as they do so, the happiness of mankind is abundantly provided for and secured, in the several societies; and, notwithstanding the physical events to which the members of these societies may stand sometimes exposed, every reasonable man, every man who is not a disciple of such a whining philosopher as Wollaston, nor such a presumptous divine as Clarke, will confess, that such a state is as happy not only as human eye ever saw, or human ear ever heard, but as the heart of man can conceive to belong to humanity; and much more happy than creatures, but one degree above those whom they despise, could expect to be.

It is true, indeed, that governments shift and change not only their administrations, but their forms. Good princes and magistrates carry on the work of God, and by making men better, make them happier. When these are corrupt the infection spreads. They corrupt the people; the people them; social love is extinguished, and passion divides those whom reason united. When the abuse is confined within certain bounds, the condition of many men may be happy, and that of all may be still tolerable: and, when the abuse exceeds such degrees, and when confusion or oppression becomes intolerable, we are to consider that they who suffer deserve to suffer. Good government cannot grow excessively bad, nor liberty be turned into slavery, unless the body of a people

ple cooperate to their own ruin. The laws, by which societies are governed, regard particulars, and individuals are rewarded or punished by men. But the laws, by which the moral as well as the physical world is governed, regard generals: and communities are rewarded or punished by God, according to the nature of things, in the ordinary course of his providence, and even without any extraordinary interposition. Look round the world, ancient and modern, and you will observe the general state of mankind to increase in happiness, or decline to misery, as virtue or vice prevails in their several societies. Thus the Author of nature has been pleased to constitute the human system, and he must be mad, who thinks that any of the atheistical, theological, or philosophical makers and menders of worlds could have constituted it better. The saying of Alphonsus, king of Castile, who found so many faults in the construction of the material world, that he pronounced himself able to have given the Supreme Architect a better plan, has been heard with horrour by every theist. Shall we hear without horrour the men spoken of here, when they find fault with the moral, as well as physical plan; when they found accusations against the goodness, justice, and wisdom of God, merely on their pride; when they assume, on no other foundation, that man is, or ought to have been, the final cause of the creation, and rail as heartily at Providence as Plutarch represents Epicurus to have done: in short, when they go so far as to impute to God

the introduction or permission of those very evils, which neither God is answerable for, if I may use such an expression, nor nature, nor reason, but our own perverse wills, and the wrong elections we make?

I cannot hear any part of this without horrour; and therefore, if I had walked with Wollaston* in some retired field, my meditations would have been very different from his, more just, and more reverential toward the Supreme Being. I should have been very sure, that neither lifeless matter, nor the vegetative tribe, have any reflex thoughts, nor any thoughts at all. I should have been convinced, that the faculty of thinking is given to sensitive animals, as we call them, in a lower degree than to man. But I should not have been convinced, that they have the power of exercising it in respect of present objects only. The contrary would appear to me, on some occasions, as manifest in them, or in some of them, as it appears on others, and on more, in the man who is born dumb. I should feel the superiority of my species, but I should acknowledge the community of our kind. I should rouse in my mind a grateful sense of these advantages above all others, that I am a creature capable of knowing, of adoring, and worshipping my Creator, capable of discovering his will in the law of my nature, and capable of promoting my happiness by obeying it. I should acknowledge thankfully, that I am able, by

* Rel. of Nat. p. 209.

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the superiority of my intellectual faculties, much better than my fellow creatures, to avoid some evils and soften others, which are common to us and to them. I should confess, that as I proved myself more rational than they, by employing my reason to this purpose, so I should prove myself less rational by repining at my state here, and by complaining that there are any unavoidable evils. I should confess that neither perfect virtue nor perfect happiness are to be found among the sons of men; and that we ought to judge of the continuance of one, as we may judge of our perseverance in the other, according to a maxim in the ethicks of Confucius; not by this, that we never fall from either, since in that sense there would be no one good, and no one happy man in the world; but by this, that when we do fall we rise again, and pursue the journey of life in the same road. Let us pursue it contentedly, and learn, that, as the softest pillow on which we can lay our heads has been said by Montagne to be ignorance, we may say more properly that it is resignation. He alone is happy, and he is truly so, who can say, Welcome life whatever it brings! Welcome death whatever it is! "Aut transfert, aut finit." If the former, we change our state, but we are still the creatures of the same God. He made us to be happy here. He may make us happier in another system of being. At least, this we are sure of, we shall be dealed with according to the perfections of his nature, not according to the imperfections of our own. Resignation in this instance

stance cannot be hard to one who thinks worthily of God, nor in the other, except to one who thinks too highly of man. That you, or I, or even Wollaston himself, should return to the earth from whence we came, to the dirt under our feet, or be mingled with the ashes of those herbs and plants from which we drew nutrition while we lived, does not seem any indignity offered to our nature, since it is common to all the animal kind: and he, who complains of it as such, does not seem to have been set, by his reasoning faculties, so far above them in life, as to deserve not to be levelled with them at death. We were like them before our birth, that is nothing. So we shall be on this hypothesis like them too after our death, that is nothing. What hardship is done us? None, unless it be a hardship, that we are not immortal, because we wish to be so, and flatter ourselves with that expectation. As well might that emperor of China have complained of his disappointment, when he imagined he had bought immortality of a certain impostor, who pretended to give it, and then died. If this hypothesis were true, which I am far from assuming, I should have no reason to complain, though, having tasted existence, I might abhor nonentity. Since then the first cannot be demonstrated by reason, nor the second be reconciled to my inward sentiment, let me take refuge in resignation at the last, as in every other act of my life. Let others be solicitous about their future state, and frighten, or flatter themselves, as prejudice, imagination, bad health,

health, or good health, nay, a lowering day, or a clear sunshine, shall inspire them to do. Let the tranquillity of my mind rest on this immoveable rock, that my future, as well as my present state, is ordered by an Almighty and Allwise Creator; and that they are equally foolish and presumptuous, who make imaginary excursions into futurity, and who complain of the present.

These reflections on the general and usual state of mankind may be carried much further, and more may be added. But these are sufficient; and I proceed to plead the cause of God on another head, against the same confederates.

LII.

If you improve in your own thoughts the hints dispersed in the precedent reflections, you, whose good understanding is undebauched by metaphysicks, will see very evidently the truth of these two propositions. First, that, supposing the world we inhabit to be a scene of as many evils as it is represented to be, the arguments drawn from thence against the wisdom, or power, or goodness of God, are inconclusive. God is the Creator and Governor of the universe, not of this world alone, a small, and probably a very inconsiderable part of it; so that, if there was really more evil than good in this part, it would conclude nothing against the whole, wherein there might be still much more good than evil, nor consequently against the divine attributes. Secondly, that there is even in this world so much more good than

than evil, and the general state of mankind is so happy in it, that the exaggerated descriptions of a supposed contrary state would make no impression against these attributes, if men had not been induced to think, most absurdly, that God could have no good reason for creating them, but that of communicating happiness to them, and happiness such as they would have, happiness without alloy. The accusation brought against the goodness of God is founded, therefore, on a false representation, and an arbitrary supposition. Modern philosophers are more to be blamed on this account than the ancients. They have a nobler view of the immense universe. They know that this planet is a part of it. How then can they assume, that this part was made for one species of animals it produces, rather than for the whole system? Divines are still more to be blamed than mere philosophers. A confederacy with atheists becomes ill the professors of theism, and less than any those who pretend to teach it. No matter: they persist, and having done their best, in concert with their allies, to destroy the belief of the goodness of God, they endeavour to destroy the belief of his justice, which is a further article of their alliance. I have said already, that lest the bare existence of physical and moral evil should not afford the atheists colour enough to deny the being of a God, nor the divines a sufficient foundation to erect a Heaven and a Hell, they proceed to consider these evils relatively to the distribution of them, and they pronounce this distribution unjust,

just. Their declamations are heard on this subject with a double advantage, the partiality of love, and prejudice of aversion. Men are apt to pass easily and silently over the good, and complain loudly of the evil by which they are affected in their own persons, or in the persons of those, whom they approve. As easily and silently do they pass over evil, which they never think sufficient, and complain loudly of the good, which they always think too much, that falls to the share of those whom they disapprove, or who stand on any account in opposition to them. On such motives they are induced to charge the providence of God with injustice. But here the confederacy breaks. The atheist concludes once more that there is no God. The divine still maintains that there is one. How well they both support the charge, how effectually the latter reasserts the justice of the Supreme Being, we are now to inquire: and I persuade myself, that you will be under some surprise to find a charge so groundless, that has been so long and so clamorously brought, and an hypothesis so weak, that has prevailed so long and so generally among theists. I know not, whether the natural temper and disposition of mankind, by which we must account for one, or the political and private interests, by which we must account for the other, will take off this surprise, till you have considered them thoroughly, in their rise and progress, and found them to be permanent causes of permanent effects. Then, indeed, your surprise will cease, because you will find nothing in this case, which you will

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not find in many others; that is, errour established and perpetuated by affections, passions, interest, and authority among men, in opposition to the plainest dictates of their reason.

That good men are often unhappy, and bad men happy, has been a subject of invective, rather than of argument, to Epicurus, to Cotta, and to others among the ancients. It has been too nearly so in the writings of some of the moderns, and little less in those of some eminent divines. I have quoted Clarke on several occasions. I must quote him on this. In his Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, as well as in his Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God†, he presumes to say: "It is certain and necessary, "even as certain as the moral attributes of God," (and he had before affirmed the moral to be as essential to the divine nature as the natural, and, therefore, as certain as God's existence) "that "there must be, at some time or other, such a "revolution, and renovation of things, such a "future state of existence of the same persons, "as that, by an exact distribution of rewards and "punishments therein, all the present disorders "and inequalities may be set right, and that the "whole scheme of Providence may appear at it's "consummation to be a design worthy of infinite "wisdom, justice, and goodness." At it's consummation; for it appears actually unworthy of them, as these men not only imply, but say. The hypothetical certainty and necessity on which the

* P. 130. † P. 131.

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doctor is willing to risk our acknowledgment of a Supreme Being, or our denial of him, is founded on this assertion; "that rewards and punish-" ments, in general, are necessary to support the " honour of God, and of his law and govern-" ment;" and on this assumed proposition, "that " the condition of mankind, in this present state, " is such, that the natural order of things is per-" verted, and virtue and goodness prevented from " obtaining their proper and due effects." Audacious and vain sophist! His whole chain of reasoning from the moral attributes of God downward is nothing more than one continued application of moral human ideas to the designs and conduct of God: and in this case he assumes most preposterously, that the scheme and order of things, which God has established in this system of ours, are such as cannot be reconciled even to the notions of human justice. His terms have a very solemn air, that may impose on the unwary, and confirm the habitual prejudices of others. But he who analyses them, and attends to the sense of them, will perceive, that more absurdity cannot be stuffed into so few words.

To begin this analyse: let us consider the terms, good and bad, happy and unhappy, as they stand here applied. Men will be never agreed about the former; the latter can never be ascertained: and, consequently, the proposition, that good men are unhappy, and bad men happy, should not be advanced in the sense in which it is advanced, and as if the natural order of things

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was perverted; for what is the natural order of things? It is that which the Author of nature has established, and according to which evil may happen sometimes to the good, and good to the bad: but according to which, likewise, virtue can never lead to unhappiness, nor vice to happiness. It is false, therefore, to say, that the natural order is actually perverted; as if unhappiness was really become the consequence of virtue, and happiness of vice, in the course of human affairs. But now, who are the good? who are the bad? If by the good are intended such as conform themselves to the law of nature, and by the bad such as violate this law; the words are very equivocal, and must appear so in their applications. Men differ in nothing more than in the characters they impute to one another, even in their private thoughts: and when they agree the most, it is very possible they may not judge as God judges, though they pretend to judge by the same rule, which they call the eternal reason of things. Those whom they admire for great achievements, they call great; those who have done them good, they call good, and often confound the two. So that the justice of Divine Providence is condemned, or acquitted, on the fallible and interested judgments of men.

Such indeed they are. Go back to the early ages of the world. Consider their heroes and their demigods: observe by what goodness they acquired the honours of deification. They destroyed sometimes robbers or wild beasts. Others of them sowed corn, planted the vine, and invented

vented useful arts. Did these alone constitute good men according to the law of nature? By no means. Not even the last. Of all the cardinal virtues, fortitude seems chiefly to have been cultivated by the heroes of antiquity: and, notwithstanding some good that they did, their rapes, their duels, their battles, the injuries they offered, and the vengeance they took, made them at once the objects of admiration, and plagues to mankind. When we descend to later ages, more enlightened by philosophy, and more renowned for wisdom of government, we find the characters of good and bad men rather more equivocal, and much honour done to great vices, as well as to great virtues, according to the modes and prevalent passions of the time, which sanctified, by the help of prepossession and flattery, such actions as right reason can never approve. If we judge by this, and by this alone we should judge; what shall we think of those Roman and Greek worthies, for instance, whose names and actions have been delivered down by their historians so pompously to posterity *? I might call in question the chastity of Scipio, and the fidelity of Regulus to his parole. I might doubt, on the face of their history, and without any more particular anecdotes, whether Drusus was a less factious citizen than Saturninus. I might bring reasons to excuse, perhaps to justify, the Gracchi. I might prove, by some letters of Cicero to Atticus, that the second Bru-

* Vid. Au. Gellium.

tus was the vilest of usurers. But I wave such particulars as we have not, for the most part, sufficient means of examining, and I ask, whether the best of these men, in the best days of the Roman or Grecian commonwealths, were not the instruments of ambition, of avarice, of injustice, and cruelty? They were great men, most certainly, but their goodness was often problematical, in Greece as well as at Rome. When revealed religions arose, a true one like the Christian, a false one like the Mahometan, the same uncertainty remained, and the same fallacious judgments were made about morality. But there arose too a new sort of goodness at the same time, for we need attempt to go no further back: and about this men can never be agreed. The Christians pass for ill men among the Mahometans, the Mahometans among the Christians; the sects of Omar and Ali censure each other: we tax your church with superstition and idolatry; she taxes ours with heresy and schism: and thus contrary judgments are passed on one another, not only by particular men, but by whole communities. It may be said, that these judgments are not passed as generally, and as rashly, as I pretend; and that the Christian, who condemns the Mahometan, or the Mahometan, who condemns the Christian religion, may distinguish very truly at the same time between the good and the bad men of the contrary party. But if it be said, it will not hold; for the new sort of goodness, which has been mentioned, is that, not only as much, but more than moral goodness, by a regard

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or disregard to which, the justice of God, in the dispensations of Providence, is tried in every religion that claims the prerogative of a revealed system, and according to which it is assumed, that men will be rewarded or punished hereafter. Such has been, and such is, the state of this matter.

Let us consider next the terms, happy and unhappy. They are more vague, and less easy to be ascertained in their application than the others. Agreeable sensations, the series whereof constitutes happiness, must arise from health of body, tranquillity of mind, and a competency of wealth. An absolute privation of all these we are not to suppose. The case cannot happen; or if it could, an immediate end would be put to the miserable being. But how shall we judge for other men of several degrees, in which they enjoy all or any of these? How shall we make up their several accounts of agreeable and disagreeable sensations, and pronounce their state to be, according to the balance, tolerable, or happy, or very happy? To pretend to it is at least as absurd, as to pretend to measure the degrees of goodness; since neither of them consists so much in outward show as it does in the inward sentiment; and yet, without being able to measure both, what saucy, what pragmatical presumption is it to pretend, in any sort, to judge of providential dispensations, even supposing them to be those of particular providencies!

LIII.

We will enter, if you please, first into some reflections on the general tendency of virtue and vice to promote happiness, and after that into a more particular detail. I think then, that health of body is pretty equally distributed to good men and bad, whether Jews, Christians, Turks, or Infidels. In this respect too, the good are likely to have in themselves, and in their posterity, much the advantage. But, besides, if health and vigour of body were to be found more commonly among the wicked than the good, it might appear to be, like other instances of prosperity, the cause, it will never appear to be the effect of vice.

Tranquillity of mind is the inseparable companion of virtue, that adds relish and savour to all the comforts, and takes off their bitter taste from all the misfortunes of life. It is the health of the mind. Without this, no intellectual joy can be tasted, as without the other no corporeal pleasure. The virtuous man looks back with complacency, and feels the truth of that saying of Tully: "a good conscience is the great theatre of virtue." The present satisfies him, and the future gives him no alarm. The second Brutus exclaimed, that virtue was an empty name. Stoical virtue was little better; nor his, in particular, any more than a mask that hid, under an appearance of apathy, the most violent and the vilest passions, like the sanctity

sanctity of several ancient and modern saints, who have imposed on the christian world. But true moral virtue is something very real. It is the cause of our happiness, it maintains the tranquillity of human life. If happiness be a series of agreeable sensations, the less this series is exposed to interruption, the more happy we are. But it must be exposed to perpetual interruptions, if that which causes, and maintains it, be not in our own power. Virtue is so: and thus virtue may be said, without any paradox, to be it's own reward*. If it has no reward from without, it rewards itself by inward, and therefore independent tranquillity.

Good men may have commonly a less share in the advantages of fortune, as they are less likely to use the means of acquiring them, but then they want them less: and though it be a false thought, which Seneca makes the divinity employ, "that "their happiness consists in wanting no happi-"ness†," yet is it true, that their happiness is enhanced, as well as secured, by a great independence on every thing external; and the same Seneca says, somewhere else, most divinely well, that he placed the good things he enjoyed within his reach, and yet at such a distance, that fortune might take, but could not tear them from him,

* Hoc dabitis, ut opinor, si modo sit aliquid, esse beatum, id oportere totum poni in potestate sapientis. Nam si amitti vita beata potest, beata esse non potest.- Tull. de Fin. l. 2.

† Intus omne posui donum. Non carere felicitate felicitas vestra est. De Provid.

The good man slakes his thirst with a moderate draught of outward prosperity. The chalice of the wicked man is never sufficient, be it never so large: and to all his passions, as well as to his avarice, "nescio quid curtæ semper abest rei." There is a fragment among Plutarch's Miscellanies, where Fortune and Vice are introduced like the contractors, who appear and make their offers, when any publick work is to be let out. Fortune boasts, that she can take from men every outward good, and bring upon them every outward evil. Vice replies, that this is true, but that it is not sufficient to make them miserable, unless she gives her assistance; whereas she is able to render them so without the assistance of Fortune, and in spite of all her endeavours to make them happy.

Thus heathen philosophers taught mankind, and there was no need of defending the Providence of God against Zeno, nor Aristotle. The former held, that there was no real good but virtue. The latter, that health of body, and the external advantages of fortune, might be reckoned among the good things of life, but that they were such in a degree very far below those that result from virtue. Happiness, therefore, fell solely to the share of good men, according to the Stoicians; or principally to them, according to the Peripateticks*: and this was indeed a noble contest.

* Pugnant Stoici cum Peripateticis. Alteri negant quidquam esse bonum, nisi quod honestum sit. Alteri plurimum se, et longé longéque plurimum tribuere honestati; sed tamen et in corpore, et extra, esse quædam bona. Certamen honestum, et disputatio splendida. Tull. de Fin. L. 2.

Chris-

Christians are far from having any such. If they do not assume, that health and the advantages of fortune constitute happiness solely, they assume, that it is constituted principally by these; since on the want which good men have sometimes of these they accuse God of injustice. They pretend to keep an account between God and man, to barter so much virtue, or so many acts of devotion, against so many degrees of honour, of power, of riches; and to have their piety purchased by the gratification of their passions. If God exacts the duty, he must pay the price. If he does not pay it in this life, he must pay it in another. Till that time, they give him credit: and if he does not pay it then, he is an unjust and cruel being. I will crayon out a picture on this occasion in imitation of those Cleanthes used to draw, when he disputed against the partisans of volupty. Let all good christians, to denote their goodness and the justice of God, be fat and jolly like canons in the Lutrin. Let them be seated on thrones, with diadems on their heads, sceptres in their hands, and purple robes on their shoulders. Let the Virtues, like so many Cupids in Albano's picture, run about the landscape, busy in the service of their masters. Let Justice lead the wicked like slaves, with retorted arms, and downcast eyes, to their footstools. Let Temperance serve pyramids of ortolans and brimmers of Tockay on their tables. Let Moderation offer, and they receive, sacks filled with gold and silver, and baskets full of diamonds and rubies. In the midst

and front of the piece let the great Lama of the East be placed on a higher throne than the rest, if it be sent to some Tartarian temple: his younger brother of the West, if it be sent to St. Peter's church at Rome: his grace of Canterbury, or my lord of London, if it be sent to St. Paul's; and Luther, or Calvin, if it be sent to any other religious assembly of christians in these parts of the world.

Having said thus much to show the general tendency of virtue to promote the inward and real happiness of mankind, in opposition to divines and atheists, who make it consist so much in outward enjoyments, that every diminution of these, in the circumstances of every reputed good man, is an instance brought in proof of the unjust dispensations of Providence; I proceed to take notice of some particular instances, that have been so brought. They will serve, I think, to show, that God is wise, and man a fool; and that of all fools, the most presumptuous, and, at the same time, the most trifling, are metaphysical philosophers and divines.

I neither deny nor affirm particular providencies. The supposition of such has given occasion to much lying, to much flattery, to much uncharitableness, to much superstition and enthusiasm. When the votive pictures of those who had escaped being drowned were shown to Diagoras, at Samothracia, he asked where the pictures were of those who had perished at sea. The atheist believed no providence, for he believed no God. The priests

priests would not have been overmuch concerned to convince him of a general providence, but they would have produced their legends, as well as their relicks, to prove to him the particular providencies, by which their votaries had been saved. I enter here no further into the discussion of this point. But this I say, that the physical and moral systems have no need, like the bungling works and imperfect institutions of men, to be carried on by frequent interpositions and partial directions, that they may continue to answer the intent of the Maker. The ordinary course of things, preserved and conducted by a general providence, confirms what the law of reason and of nature teaches us. The law is not only given, but executed. The authority of the Lawgiver makes it our duty, the sanctions make it our interest, to obey the law: and these sanctions have their effect so often, that they leave no doubt concerning them. They have their effect as often as it is necessary in terrorem. In imitation of providential government, human government goes no further; and yet there are a parcel of little tyrants, who find fault with the former for going no further. God punishes to reform, as far as our nature, and his scheme, permit. They are angry, that he is not as angry as they are, that every criminal is not racked on the wheel, and that he does not punish to exterminate. Let us descend to particular instances, that are urged against the justice of God, in order to prove it, and to confirm

firm what has been said concerning good and bad, happy and unhappy men.

LIV.

TULLY lies still open before me, and there I find many instances of this sort produced by Cotta, with as much confidence as if they were decisive. Why did the two Scipios fall in Spain, and Marcellus and Paulus in Italy, making war against the Carthaginians? Why did Maximus bury his son, who was of consular dignity? Why was the Æmilian Scipio not safe in his own house? Why was Rutilius banished, Drusus assassinated, Scævola slain at the altar of Vesta, and Catulus obliged to procure his own death? Why did Marius die in his bed, after a seventh consulship? Why were he, and Cinna, Dionysius the elder, Pisistratus, Phalaris, Appollodorus, and even the assassin Varius, and the highwayman Harpalus, suffered so long to exercise, with impunity, their cruelties? The day would be too short, indeed, to enumerate instances of any kind in this declamatory, loose, and inconclusive manner*. It is not unlike the proceeding of certain great scholars, who crowd their text and their margin with a multitude of names, which stand as vouchers of the facts or

* Dies deficiat, si velim numerare quibus bonis malé evenerit; nec minus, si commemorem quibus improbis optimé.

opinions

opinions they advance, and impose often on the unwary, who will not, and the ignorant, who cannot examine for themselves; while they, who will and can examine, discover these pretended vouchers to be sometimes of no authority, sometimes of neither, and sometimes of the contrary side. I could point out signal examples of this sort in the writings of admired authors: and we might have seen some such, perhaps, on this occasion, if Cicero had made Balbus reply to Cotta, as he makes him lay in a claim to do, with no small confidence.

I regret the want of this reply, much more on account of facts, than arguments: for the Stoicks were great logicians, and pitiful reasoners. Their whole philosophy was little more than a perpetual play with words; and, on this occasion for instance, to have replied in character, Balbus must have insisted, that pain is not an evil, as Posidonius did, when he roared out in a fit of the gout*. He might have owned it to be something rough, abhorrent to nature, difficult to be borne, melancholy, and hard. He might have applied the definition of evil to the sensation of pain, but must not have called it by that name, because the Portick had decreed, that there is no evil but in vice,

* Concludunt ratiunculis Stoici cur non sit malum; quasi de verbo, non de re, laboretur. - - - Asperum est, contra naturam, difficile perpessu, triste, durum. Hæc copia verborum est; quod omnes uno verbo malum appellamus, id tot modis posse dicere. Definis tu mihi, non tollis dolorem. Tusc. Disc. L. 2.

nor

nor in any good but in virtue. No matter. He would have set very probably the facts, which Cotta quoted, in a different light, and would have shown, by a fuller and more accute state of them, that they were insufficient to his purpose. It is very probable, he would have done this, since we have good reason, even at this time, to doubt the exact truth of some of these anecdotes, and to suspect both prejudice and partiality in the characters.

I know not whether Balbus would have called in question the story of Regulus*. It was probably fabulous, in many circumstances at least, and there were those among the Romans, who thought it to be so. But it served to blacken the Carthaginians, to whom they bore an immortal hatred, and popular prejudice kept it in credit at Rome: as we see that many false traditions about the Saracens and Turks have been kept up for several ages, and are so still, notwithstanding the detection of them, in christian nations. Their poets and their orators sanctified the tale for the honour of the Roman name, as the most illustrious instance of magnanimity, fortitude, and a religious attachment to engagements taken even with an enemy, that was ever given. Balbus then might have rejected the story; or, taking it for true, he might have insisted, that it furnished an example of human virtue, but none of divine injustice. He might have made Regulus a voluntary martyr, as

* Vid. Au. Gellium.

Seneca

Seneca makes the philosopher Diogenes a confessor of natural religion.

One of these Stoicians might have anticipated the answers, which the other of them gave to such examples as that of Rutilius, who was banished, or that of Maximus, who lost a son arrived to consular honours. He would have said of such men as these, that they were unfortunate, but not unhappy, that they were moved, but not overcome *. He might have pushed his argument against Cotta further, on the principles of the Portick. He might have maintained, that the misfortunes of some good men are designed as lessons to all by Providence, in whose dispensations more regard is had to mankind, than to particular men †. In general, we place happiness and unhappiness very blindly, and very falsely. Providence endeavours to open our eyes, when things, that we esteem evils, happen to the good. But we prevent the argument. Instead of concluding, that such things are not real evils, we hearken to the prejudices of imagination; we believe, and, by believing, we make them such, and then we accuse this very Providence of injustice. Even the privation of an imaginary good is esteemed a positive evil, the want of riches for instance. The man of Ross was envied by none. Chartres and Walters, whom you have rendered immortal, were

* - - - Sentit illa, sed vincit. Sen. de Provid.

† - - - - Pro universis, quorum major diis cura est, quam singulorum. Ib.

envied

envied by many. The folly prevails so far, that men have imagined the Supreme Being best pleased, when his temples have glittered with gold and silver. If you was of this opinion, as most of your communion are, and thought God more honoured on this account at St. Peter's, than St. Paul's, I would quote to you these verses:

- - - - Jupiter Ammon
Pauper adhuc Deus est, nullis violata per ævum
Divitiis delubra tenens, morumque priorum
Numen Romano templum defendit ab auro*.

The examples of those good citizens of Rome, who came to untimely ends, would not have embarrassed our Stoician. He would have asked his antagonist, what pretence could be found to accuse Providence of injustice, because men who waged war were sometimes killed, or because men who mingled in civil contests were exposed to the mutual resentments of exasperated parties? He would have asked, who could determine when it was best for him to die? Prolongation of days delivers men over, very often, to misery they would have escaped if they had died sooner, and changes the whole colour of their lives; so that the good or evil that remains in store for us, at any age, being uncertain, we can neither pronounce a man unhappy because he dies, nor

* Lact. L. 9.

happy

happy before he dies. Solon * taught this apophthegm to Crœsus, who lived to see it verified in his own case, and to reverence that wisdom, when he was the captive of Cyrus, to which he had paid little regard, while he sat on the throne of Lydia. Rome, who made all the nations from the Euphrates to the Western ocean tremble, trembled herself, when Pompey fell sick at Naples. Pompey recovered, "Multæ urbes et publica vota "vicerunt." But he recovered only to wage the civil war with his father-in-law, to take arms without being prepared to take them, to abandon Italy, to be beaten in Greece, and to be murdered by servile hands in Egypt †. Such a subject as Pompey, of such a commonwealth as the Roman, may be paired with the greatest princes. Let me mention, therefore, the late king of France, on this occasion and to the same purpose. He had passed more than forty years in the greatest prosperity, when Charles the Second of Spain died. Had he died at the same time, when that rich succession came into his family, his death would have been thought the more deplorable on this very account. He lived; he outlived his glory, his power, and if I may say so, almost his posterity. It might have been said of him: "- - - renovata semper clade domus, multis in

* - - - - Dicique beatum
Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet.

† - - - - Non enim cum socero bellum gessisset, non imparatus arma sumpsisset, etc. Tusc. Disp. L. 2.

"luctibus,

" luctibus, inque perpetuo mœrore, et nigrâ veste
" senescit."

Balbus would have shown, that the examples brought of prosperous iniquity were neither more just, nor more applicable, than those of the misery of good men. If he had allowed, that Marius had the happiness, such a one as it is, of dying in his bed, like his rival Sylla, who took the appellation of happy very ostentatiously and very unjustly, yet he would not have allowed this other man of blood the same appellation. Notwithstanding his elevation from the plough, which he followed for hire, to the highest dignities of the commonwealth*, notwithstanding his victories and triumphs, it would be difficult to find in the Roman, or any other history, a man whose crimes were more constantly punished, or whose life was a series of more misery. Beside his bodily infirmities, beside the

Exilium, et carcer, Minturnarumque paludes,
Et mendicatus victâ Carthagine panis,

he was tossed in all the storms he raised. His blood was every moment ready to flow, and the victorious sword of Sylla hung over his head. The various scenes of misery, through which he made others to go, were revenged by those, through which he went himself. There is a lively description of both in the second book of the

* - - - - - - - - Solebat
Poscere mercedes alieno lassus aratro. Juv.

Pharsalia:

Pharsalia*: and if we read his life, we shall incline to think, that prosperity was measured out to him for the punishment of others, and misery, in proportion, for his own, the executioner and the victim alternately of divine justice.

Non ille favore
Numinis ingenti superum protectus ab irâ,
Vir ferus, et Romam cupienti perdere fato
Sufficiens.

If he lived to a greater age than his brother and his son, it was in order to make him more miserable, as he had been more criminal, than they. But even they resembled him in misery, as they had resembled him in cruelty. His brother was put to a painful death at the tomb of Catulus, and his son fell on his sword in despair. Let me make another observation. Marius laid the foundations of his fortune on his ingratitude and treachery to Metellus, whose lieutenant general he had been in the Jugurthine war. Sylla had been quæstor to Marius in the same war. Sylla ruined his party, defeated his designs, and scattered his ashes in the river†. Surely Cotta, when he accused the justice of God for giving prosperity to wicked men, could not have produced a more glaring proof of the contrary.

He was not more lucky in other examples of

* - - - - - - - - Omnia passo,
Quæ pejor fortuna potest, atque omnibus uso
Quæ melior.

† Erutos cineres in Anienis alveum sparsit. Val. Max. lib. 9, c. 2.

the same sort. Our Stoician would have opposed to him, for instance, the different accounts of authors concerning the elder Dionysius, some of whom related how this tyrant had been tormented by the furies, and had perished by the treachery of his own family, while all of them concurred in representing his whole life to have been a state of misery. What, indeed, could be more miserable, than the perpetual terrour and universal distrust, wherein he passed his days? Plutarch relates, and Balbus might know long before Plutarch wrote, that this wretched man dared not trust any barber to shave him; that no one, not his brother, not his son, was suffered to come into his apartment, till he had been stripped and searched, and had changed his clothes, and that the tyrant owned himself afraid even of the best of his friends: so that if he reigned eight and thirty years, as Cotta says, he was eight and thirty years miserable. A noble instance truly of the prosperity of the wicked!

Our Stoician would have shown, perhaps, that the example of Pisistratus was not pertinent. He used violence to gain, and, more than once, to regain the supreme power at Athens, as Gelo and Hiero did in Sicily, as others used it against him, and as it must always happen when parties contend for power. But when he had got this power, he used it well, like those Sicilian princes: and though he was called a tyrant, in the bad sense of the word, by the party opposed to him, yet he showed the licentious Greeks how much a limited monarchy, for he limited his by the laws and advice

vice of Solon, was preferable to one of their turbulent and tyrannical democracies. Phalaris was a monster in cruelty; but the people of Agrigentum roasted him in his own bull, after he had roasted the maker of it: and the Orchomenians took a severe vengeance on Apollodorus. The same would have been observed to have happened to other tyrants among the Greeks, to Cinna among the Romans, and to other inferior villains; such as Varius, who stabbed Drusus and poisoned Metellus; such as Harpalus, whose long success in robbery bore testimony against the gods, as Diogenes the Cynick, who barked against them, and whom Cotta condescends to quote, presumed to say.

But the pontiff would not have been silenced by these answers. He had a reply ready. "Prohi- "beri melius fuit impedirique." It had been better in the gods to hinder these men from doing so much mischief, than to leave them to vengeance afterward. Now I think that Balbus would have treated this reply as a mere evasion, grounded on a false supposition, and, even with that help, insufficient. The men spoken of, would he have said, are far from enjoying inward happiness, whatever outward prosperity may attend the course of their wicked lives. They live in danger, in fear, and in perpetual anguish of mind. Their punishment, therefore, is not deferred: and if they are suffered long to punish others, they are ministers and proofs at the same time of that divine justice which I defend. Their prosperity

serves to this very purpose. A Dionysius, or a Cinna, or any other inhuman tyrant, is to be looked upon like one of those monsters which the poets feigned. Like a Minotaur fed with human flesh, or such a boar as executed Diana's vengeance in Ætolia. Bolts of destroying thunder go out of their mouths*. Their very breath scatters desolation around. When the monster has inflicted the punishment he was sent to inflict, when the measure of his iniquity, and of God's justice, is filled, a Theseus or a Meleager is raised up, and he perishes.

This is the general course of things, which Infinite Wisdom has constituted; and the examples of the few, who suffer necessarily though occasionally according to it, are sufficient to give a warning to all men, that they are inexcusable if they do not take. Cotta, who exercises greater injustice toward God, than any of the tyrants he quotes did toward men, is much scandalised that those two eyes of the Mediterranean coast, Corinth and Carthage, were put out. Critolaus violated the respect that was due to the Roman legates. Asdrubal used much cruelty to the Roman captives. These were the immediate causes of the ruin of those two republicks, and Memmius and Scipio were the instruments of pride, of ambition, and of insatiable resentment. God could

* - - - Ultorem spreta per agros misit aprum.
Fulmen ab ore venit, frondes afflatibus ardent.
Ovid Metam. L. 8.

have

have prevented these destructions no doubt, "subvenire certé potuit, et conservare urbes tantas atque tales." But how did the pontiff know that Memmius and Scipio were not instruments of the justice of Providence, as well as of Roman policy and passion? The worst men, and the Romans were none of the best, are employed to punish the worst. None so fit for the task They are the instruments, and in their turns the examples of divine justice. The wealth, the splendour, the magnificence of Corinth were great; but Corinth was a sink of iniquity. Carthage was a great and powerful state; but the Carthaginians were a faithless, factious, and cruel people. Might not these be the remote and true causes, whatever the immediate and apparent were, of their destruction? Was God obliged to save them by an extraordinary interposition against the ordinary course of his Providence, because their neighbours admired or feared them? The Romans had no advantage in real virtue over the Carthaginians, though they had it greatly in policy, order, discipline, and a certain enthusiastick zeal for the grandeur of their empire, and the glory of the Roman name. If we had Philistus, or any of the Carthaginian historians in our hands, we should see very evidently what we may collect from those of Rome, that Romana fides was, or deserved to be, a proverbial term of reproach in Africk, as much as Punica fides in Italy. Let us take then occasion to adore the wisdom and justice of Di-

vine Providence from an example brought in opposition to the latter. The Romans destroyed Carthage, and, by her destruction, prepared the way to their own. At the very time when Cotta lamented that of Corinth and Carthage, that of Rome was coming on; for the loss of her liberty was connected with that of her empire by a scarce interrupted succession of tyrants. Under these she lay, as it were on a rack, and died a lingering and painful death.

LV.

In asserting the justice of Providence, I choose rather to insist on the constant, visible, and undeniable course of a general providence, which is sufficient for the purpose, than to assume a dispensation of particular providencies. The atheist, who assumes that there ought to be such, complains that they are wanting. The theist, who admits that there are such, complains that they are insufficient. The former draws from what he assumes a pretence to cavil. The latter only grows inconsistent; for I would ask him, if there are any such providencies, why not more? He admits enough to break through and overturn the natural order and constitution of the physical and moral system. How comes it to pass, that there are not enough to stop his mouth, when he complains of the misery of man and the injustice of Providence? The truth is, that we have not in philosophical speculation, in any history except that of the Bible, nor in our own experience, sufficient

sufficient grounds to establish the doctrine of particular providences, and to reconcile it to that of a general Providence, which continues, and directs the course of things in the material and intellectual systems, as these systems were originally constituted by the Author of nature. They who have attempted to do this, by showing with great, and as I think, with too much subtilty of wit and license of imagination, in what cases, how far, and in what manner, God may act by particular and occasional interpositions, consistently with the preservation of that general order of causes and effects which he has constituted, seem to me quite unintelligible. It is impossible to conceive, that the course of the sun, or the double revolution of the Earth, should be suspended or altered by a temporary, nay, a momentary interposition of some particular providence, or that any thing worthy of such an interposition should happen in the material world, without violating the mechanical constitution of it, and the natural order of causes and effects in it. As little is it possible to conceive such occasional interpositions in the intellectual system, as shall give new thoughts and new dispositions to the minds of men, and in consequence new determinations to their wills, without altering in every such instance the ordinary and natural progression of human understanding, nor without resuming that freedom of will, which every man is conscious that he has, though some are absurd enough to deny it, and to oppose metaphysical dreams to intuitive

knowledge. I confess, that I comprehend as little the metaphysical as the physical impulse of spirits*, and that the words suggestion, silent communication, sudden influence, influx, or injection of ideas, give me no determinate, clear, and distinct ideas, nor even, as I suspect, to the persons who talk of them the most, and build so much upon them.

To acknowledge the fatum of ancient philosophers, to hold with the Mahometans an absolute predestination of all events, with Spinoza and Calvin the necessity of all our actions, or with Leibnitz his whimsy of a preestablished harmony, would be somewhat almost as mad, as to take the true history of Lucian for such. On the other hand it would be absurd and impious both, to assert with Epicurus, that the world was made by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and that, as it was made so, it is governed by chance, without any knowledge, without any rule, without any providence. The truth lies between these extremes. The world is governed by laws, which the Creator imposed on the physical and moral systems, when he willed them into existence, which make a part of them, which must be in force as long as they last, and any change in which would be a change of the systems themselves. These laws are invariable, but they are general: and from this generality what we call contingency arises. The laws of matter and motion, those

* Relig. of Nat. Delineated, et alibi.

which

which we know and those which have not been yet discovered, are fixed, no doubt. But within the latitude which they allow, though nothing happens which is repugnant to them, many things happen which seem so to us. Plastick, or fashioning nature, produces sometimes monsters, and all material beings, as they partake of the good, partake of the evil, which matter and motion cause; for it would be trifling to object the assumed existence of beings, material indeed like the saints in Heaven, if those glorified bodies are material, according to our idea of matter, but existing in systems that are not liable to the same inconveniencies or evils that arise from matter and motion, such as pain, sickness, or death, for instance, which our system is. There is no need of any great sagacity to perceive, that the case is much the same in the moral world; nay that it is more liable to contingency than the natural. The moral world is subject to the law of right reason, fixed, invariable, promulgated in the very nature of things, and enforced by the sanctions of rewards and punishments, which follow often the observation or the breach of it. But then, instead of two principles, whereof one is active, and the other passive only, as in the other case, there are in this two active principles, though one be slower than the other, reason and passion. Both necessary in the human state. Both useful when reason, both hurtful when passion governs. Between both stands the freedom of our will, which can determine either way, and from this constitution

constitution arises all that mixture of moral good and evil, that we see and feel.

As little as the atheist and the divine approve the natural and moral constitution of the world, they are unable to show how it might be altered in any particular instance, except for the worse upon the whole; and, therefore, they must be reduced at last to assert, that goodness and justice require the whole should be altered, as they required originally that there should have been no such system made. In the first light they deserve to be treated like froward children, who complain, and wish, and know neither what they want, nor what they desire. In the second, they deserve to be treated like patients proper for Dr. Monro, and to be put under his care. Nothing less than metaphysicks could have turned so many good heads. Common sense and common observation would have hindered them from assuming, on the faith of this fantastical science, that God made the world for the sake of man; and man for this reason alone, that he might communicate happiness to his creature: which two suppositions are affirmed or implied in all their arguments, and thus a large field of complaint is opened to them. Without these they would have had no pretence to criticise the works of God, nor the dispensations of Providence, to upbraid his goodness, nor to censure his justice. On the contrary they would have found reason to admire, thankfully and submissively, that Supreme Wisdom, which has provided so amply, by a few general laws, for the well

well being of all his creatures. But it is with this very instance of supreme wisdom, that they find fault. General laws, under the direction of a general providence, do not provide sufficiently for human happiness, according to them; and their notions of human importance are wound up so high, that they think there ought to be as many providencies as men, on which notion guardian angels, and genii, and dæmons were introduced, and are hardly yet exploded; or else, that the immediate providence of God should be attentive to all the wants and prayers of men, though the wants are often imaginary, and the prayers impertinent; and should be ready on every occasion to protect and reward the good, or punish and reclaim the wicked.

Every religion boasts of many instances, wherein the Divine Providence has been thus exercised. We need go no further than our own ecclesiastical historians, and other christian writers, to find them. The most common events are represented by exaggeration and declamation, to have been extraordinary interpositions of the hand of God. Nay at this time there is many an old woman, who thinks herself as important as your and Gay's parish clerk, and is ready to relate with much spiritual pride the particular Providences, that have attended her and hers. Thus then the matter stands. The same persons, who have contributed to establish this belief, have propagated, and continue to propagate an opinion, that the Supreme Being deals unjustly with mankind

and shall rest the cause of God on the latter, which are likewise the most proper to be urged against the atheists.

LVI.

Let us consider how it appears, by the objections these difficult persons make, that we, and the system we inhabit, should have been framed to satisfy them, and to anticipate their cavils; after which it will be proper to consider further, how it is framed, and to compare God's plan with theirs. Physical nature then should have been so constituted, that the whole world might have been one Paradise, neither scorched by the sun, nor pinched by the cold, nor ruffled by tempests. Men should have enjoyed in it every natural good, have been subject to no natural evil, no not to death, which they deem to be the greatest of evils. Moral nature should have been so constituted, that every man might be necessarily determined to all the obligations of morality, that he might be good, as Paterculus says of Cato *, because he could not be otherwise. He should have been impeccable as well as invulnerable. No matter how all this would have unconnected the universe, and have broke the harmony and the consent of it's parts, in which we see that the planets of our solar system act on one another, that the sun acts on all of them, and that for

* Quia aliter esse non potuit.

ought

ought we can tell the several solar systems, that compose the universe act on one another likewise. No matter how all this would have accorded with a gradation of sense and intellect; how senses less imperfect would have broke that proportion between them and their objects, which is necessary to make them useful in human life; how superior faculties of the mind would have broke that scale of intelligence, which rises up to man in this animal system; which may rise up from him in other systems in a higher proportion, and which one of these allies, the divine, allows to do so in other created Beings. No matter for such considerations as these. Instead of concluding from the want of all these advantages, which they esteem to be due to them, that man is not so noble a creature as they have represented him to themselves, they conclude, that because he wants them God is unjust. Just so they concluded from their indeterminable notions of divine goodness, and of divine love, that the world was made for man, and man not to be moderately but immoderately happy in it; instead of concluding the very contrary from their determinate idea of wisdom, which has not proportioned any means to these ends, in making the world and man.

But the dogmatical persons who assume so much, and prove commonly so little, do not only proceed on groundless principles. They shift and vary their principles of reasoning as different occasions require, which is a practice much used, avowed, and approved by ancient fathers, and which

which makes it rather tedious than hard very often to refute their successors. In the present argument for instance, many of their complaints and objections are levelled at the whole scheme and order of things, both physical and moral. They mean nothing, or they mean that the whole should have been differently constituted, and in the manner I have hinted, to have been reconcilable to the goodness and justice of God. But they grow less severe in their criticisms, and less exorbitant in their demands at other times, and seem to think, that the divine attributes might have been saved even in the present constitution of physical and moral nature, if by continual interpositions of Providence every good man had been protected from evils of both kinds, while every ill man was exposed to them all; if the office of the angels standing before the throne of God *, and ministering to the favourites of God, that is, to the elect, had been more extended and more regularly performed. This may be looked upon as a sort of composition, into which they are driven by the extravagance of the other hypothesis, and by the absurd consequences that flow from it.

If the divine attributes had required, that there should have been no such thing as physical or moral evil, man would have been visibly the final cause of a world made solely for his use, and to be the scene of his happiness. This world would have been visibly the final cause of the

* See Dan. C. vii.

universe.

universe. All the planets would have rolled in subserviency to ours, and the fixed stars themselves would have served to no other purpose, than to twinkle by night, to adorn our canopy, and to please our eyes. But this hypothesis appearing too extravagant to be insisted upon in it's whole extent, one part of it has been laid aside, and one retained. No one will affirm in terms, I think, at this time, that our world is the final cause of the universe. But many will affirm, that man is by the goodness of God the final cause of the world he inhabits; and, therefore, if physical evil is inseparable from physical nature, and moral evil from moral nature, by the necessary relations of things, or by the general scheme which Infinite Wisdom has established, the consistency of the divine attributes required, that something more than we observe should have been done, to make the first design of God in the creation of this world and of man effectual. His goodness required at least, that the general state of mankind should not be as miserable, as it is in a world made for the sake of mankind. His justice required most certainly, that they who seek the perfection of their nature, and the happiness of their kind in virtue, should be distinguished from those who deprave their own nature, pervert the order of things, and hinder virtue from having it's due effect. What could not be affected by a general providence, acting by general laws, might have been effected by particular providences acting on

every occasion, according to the merit or demerit of every rational creature. But this has not been done, and such providences are so rare, that there is far less virtue than vice to be found, and that the former is, for the most part, unhappy, and the latter prosperous in this world. The justice of God is, therefore, justly condemned, unless there is another. Let us make a few reflections, that will show how ill this charge is laid, and how ill, if it was better laid, the expedient of another life would serve to set right the pretended irregularities of this world, and to justify the providence of God.

LVII.

To suppose a constant series of particular interpositions from above necessary to this purpose, seems to my apprehension little less absurd, than to suppose the necessity of a perpetual and universal theocracy; and to complain, that such a government of the world has not been established, is as silly as it would be to complain, that the golden age of the poets is ended, or that the millenary year of the Apocalypse is not begun. If all men had been determined necessarily to virtue, there would have been certainly no moral evil, nor probably any more physical than there was in Paradise, or than there will be in the New Jerusalem. But there would have been no merit neither

neither, nor properly speaking any such thing as virtue. Our moral obligations arise from that nature, which God willed we should have. They must continue as long as this nature exists, that is, as long as there are men: and so long whatever promotes the happiness of the kind will be virtue at least in one sense, and whatever tends to the destruction of it will be vice in every sense. Vice and virtue must take their denominations not only from their effects, but from their motives. Actions of the first sort must have always a bad motive as well as a bad effect, and must therefore be always attended with demerit. But actions of the second, or mere innocence, may have no moral motive at all, nor consequently any true merit, as in the case of an absolute and natural determination; or they may have motives, which render them rather appearances of virtue than really virtuous, and deprive them in a strict sense of all merit, as in the case of particular and occasional determinations of the will wrought by immediate interpositions of the Divine Power, whether acting silently within, or sensibly without. Our inconsistent academician confesses thus much in the very breath, in which he affirms that mankind should have been determined, some way or other, by the gods to virtue. Nay, he asserts even more than is true; for though we owe the practice of virtue to ourselves, to our own elections, and to our own free will, in which all the merit we can have consists, yet we owe

to God the means of knowing, and of practising it*.

If all men had been originally and necessarily determined by the constitution of their nature to virtue, according to Cotta's first proposition, and had therefore been able to acquire no more merit in doing virtuous actions, than they acquire in drinking when they are thirsty, or in gratifying any natural appetite, what a curious system might some philosopher of the school of Potamo have made, by joining the gods of Epicurus to the men of Cotta? Slim, taper, transparent beings in Heaven, indolent and unactive †: a succession of machines on Earth, wound up to go a certain time, to continue certain motions, and to strike at certain moments, according to their predestination, or the preestablished harmony of their system. But, in good earnest, is a system of particular providencies in which the Supreme Being, or the angels, like his ministers to reward, and his executioners to punish, are constantly employed in the affairs of mankind, much more reasonable? Would the justice of God be more manifest in such a state of things, than in the present? I see

* Virtutem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit. Nimirum recté. Propter virtutem enim jure laudamur, et in virtute recté gloriamur. Quod non contingeret, si id donum a Deo, non à nobis haberemus.

. . . Debebant illi quidem omnes bonos efficere, siquidem hominum generi consulebant. Sin id minus, bonis quidem certé consulere debebant.

† Exiles . . . . perlucidos . . . . monogrammos Deos, et nihil agentes.

no

no room for merit on the part of man, nor for justice on the part of God, in such a state; and a state of partial, not universal determinations to goodness, instead of being liable to such cavils as we have now under consideration, would be liable to unanswerable objections. It would be productive of effects quite opposite to those that are assumed, and would cause the wildest confusion in the judgments of mankind.

If some men were determined to goodness by the silent workings of the spirit, and others not, which they must be on the supposition of particular providences, and a partial, not universal determination; if the former were protected from evils of every kind, on account of this goodness, and if the latter were exposed, for want of it, to all those physical evils, which result from the constitution of the material world, as well as to all those moral evils, which men would bring on one another, what could be said to excuse the justice of God? Plainly nothing. The proceeding would be that of injustice, and an arbitrary partiality, which can never be imputed, even indirectly, to him, without blasphemy. It is not possible for me to conceive, that any thing out of himself could be a motive to the first intelligent Cause of all things to create any thing; neither can I subscribe to the opinion, that certain general independent natures tempted God, as it were, to clothe them with existence. I can conceive still less, that individual creatures, before they have done either good or evil, nay before their actual ex-

istence, can be objects of predilection or aversion, of love or hatred to God: and yet this must have been, to have made such a system of particular providencies effectual in the first instance of it. If we can conceive it made so in this, we may conceive it made so in all the rest: and if God had predetermined some men to goodness, exclusively of others, without any motive on his side, we may easily conceive, that particular providencies would have been employed to secure happiness to them, without any merit on theirs. But "credat Judæus Apella, non ego." Clarke shall not force me into atheism, though I deny what he asserts concerning the moral attributes of God, nor Wollaston though I see, not only one but many good men unhappy, and am not convinced by his reasonings of a future state.

I may be stopped here, perhaps, and may be asked, with a tone of authority, Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? If I am so stopped, and so questioned, my answer is both ready and sufficient. "Holy, or reverend sir, "I am a better theist than you, and on this occa- "sion I reason better. It is not I, that reply "against God. It is you. Had such a system "as this been actually established by God, he "would have spoke by his works, and I should, "for this very reason, have believed it agreeable "to the divine attributes, though I could not "have reconciled it to my notions of impartiality "and justice, nor even of wisdom. But since I "cannot reconcile it to them, and since I have no

"assur-

" assurance but your word, against all appear-
" ances, that God elects some men, and rejects or
" neglects others; that he softeneth the hearts of
" some, and hardeneth the hearts of others; I
" should reply against God indeed, if I admitted
" what you assert to be true. I reason cautious-
" ly, from what he has done, to his attributes.
" You affirm boldly, without any regard to what
" he has done, or to the perfections of an All-
" perfect Being."

As to the other part of the hypothesis, which supposes particular providences, that might protect the good and secure their happiness, wanting, and therefore God convicted of injustice in the present constitution of things, it is maintained, I think, by the whole chorus of divines; and they, who do not hold the doctrine I have mentioned, are as loud in their complaints, as they who do. They who agree in little else, agree in censuring the dispensations of Providence; and if some are dissatisfied with the lot of their elect, others are so as much with that of good men in general, however they came to be good. To satisfy them all, therefore, and to show himself a just Governor of the world, instead of governing by the established laws of nature, and by a general Providence, he should have corrected these laws, and have governed by particular providences, whenever the service of good men required it. If he had not made all men good, he should have made all good men happy. Now suppose it done, suppose

this human reformation of divine œconomy, what would be the consequences? Would they not be such as these?

If the good, beside the enjoyment of all that happiness which is inseparable from virtue, were exempted from all kinds of evils, and if the wicked, beside those evils which are inseparable from vice, and those which happen to all men in the ordinary course of events, were exposed to others, that the hand of God inflicted on them in an extraordinary manner; in short, if an ark was ready, at every inundation, to save the former, and if a destroying angel was ready on every occasion to wreak vengeance on the latter, it is certain, as we have observed already, that such good men would have very little merit; and it may be suspected, that the hearts of the wicked would be hardened, as that of Pharaoh was by all the plagues that God brought on him and his people. Such good men would have, while they continued to be good, no other merit than that of children, who are cajoled into their duty; or than that of galley slaves, who ply at the oar, because they hear, and see, and fear, the lash of the boatswain.

But would there not be, at the same time, some farther defects in this scheme? I think there would. It seems to me, that these good men, being thus distinguished, by particular providences in their favour, from the rest of mankind, might be apt either not to contract, or to lose that

that general benevolence, which is a fundamental principle of the law of nature, and that publick spirit, which is the life and soul of society. God has made the practice of morality our interest, as well as our duty. But men, who found themselves constantly protected from the evils that fell on others, might grow insensibly to think themselves unconcerned in the common fate: and if they relaxed in their zeal for the publick good, they would relax in their virtue; for publick good is the object of virtue. They might do worse. Spiritual pride might infect them. They might become, in their own imaginations, the little flock, or the chosen sheep. Others have become so by the mere force of enthusiasm, without any such inducements as those which we assume in this case; and experience has shown, that there are no wolves like these sheep. Thus forced into virtue, and rewarded for being virtuous, they might cease to deserve the reward in any sense or degree. On the whole; the scheme, opposed to God's scheme, is inconsistent with all our notions of wisdom, as well as of justice. It is the scheme of men: it must be tried, therefore, by human ideas and notions; and since the justice of Providence is attacked on these, it may be defended, surely, on the same. To measure the wisdom and justice of God by a rule so inadequate as that of human intelligence, is vanity and presumption in the highest degree. But to expose this vanity and presumption, by showing the men who are guilty of them, that even their own rule is sufficient

cient to condemn them, is very consistent with the modesty of true theism.

I will conclude this head by observing, that we have example, as well as reason, for us, when we reject the hypothesis of particular providences. If the government of a general Providence was liable to the objections that are made to it, a government by particular providences would be liable to none. But the contrary appears true from the example of the Jewish theocracy. God was the king of that people. He did not decline the title, nor the exercise of kingly power, as his Son, who came to suffer for all mankind and not to govern a most inconsiderable portion of them, did afterward. His presence resided among this people, and his justice was manifested daily in rewarding and punishing, by unequivocal signal miraculous interpositions of his power. The effect of all was this, the people rebelled at one time, and repented at another. Particular providences, directed by God himself immediately, and on the spot, if I may say so, had particular temporary effects only, none general nor lasting; and the people were so little satisfied with this system of government, that they deposed the Supreme Being, and insisted to have another king, and to be governed like their neighbours. How long this theocracy may be said to have continued, I am quite unconcerned to know, and should be sorry to mispend any time in inquiring. It is enough for my purpose, to have observed, that the justice of God was not so acknowledged, as to produce

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any suitable effects, at a point of time when the Israelites had no other king but God; and to conclude from thence, that if he governed the whole world at present by particular providences, they would not have a better effect in manifesting his justice, nor stop the clamour against it of the very men perhaps, who accuse now the injustice of his general Providence. Nay, the case would be much worse, and every particular exertion of his power would render his justice more disputable. So pregnant is this scheme with absurdities.

It has been said already, that where religions, which claim to have been revealed, prevail, a new character of goodness arises, beside that which consists in obedience to the laws of nature, and compliance with our moral obligations. Faith in certain men, and, on their authority, in certain facts, and certain speculative propositions, how incredible soever the former, how little intelligible soever the latter may be, together with the practice of certain duties, which the arbitrary will of man imposes, and the observation of certain forms of outward devotion—constitute this artificial goodness, which stands often in the place of natural, and is always attended to much more.

This is that kind of goodness, which christian divines intend principally or solely, when they complain that good men are often unhappy, and bad men happy, by the present constitution of things. They establish a rule, and are not agreed about

about the application of it; for who are to be reputed good christians? Go to Rome, they are Papists. Go to Geneva, they are Calvinists. Go to the north of Germany, they are Lutherans. Come to London, they are none of these. Orthodoxy is a mode. It is one thing at one time and in one place. It is something else at another time and in another place, or even in the same place; for in this religious country of ours, without seeking proofs in any other, men have been burned in one reign for the very same doctrines they were obliged to profess in another. You damn all those who differ from you. We doubt much about your salvation. In what manner, now, can the justice of God be manifested by particular providences? Must the order of them change as the notions of orthodox change, and must they be governed by events, instead of governing them? If they are favourable to those of your communion, they will be deemed unjust by every good protestant, and God will be taxed with encouraging idolatry and superstition. If they are favourable to those of any of our communions, they will be deemed unjust by every good papist, and God will be taxed with nursing up heresy and schism. God can do nothing more than to furnish arms against himself, by the dispensations of particular providences in the christian world, and every one of these will pass, in the minds of some men, for a proof of injustice, if it passes in the minds of others for a proof of justice. Nay more. If, in these dispensations,

God,

God, who knows the hearts of men, should judge differently from our divines, if he should show more regard to moral goodness, than to the reputed orthodoxy of any side, it would fare with him —I say it with reverence—as it fares with every honest man in civil contests; He would be calumniated by all sides, in the exercise of particular providences, as he is in that of a general providence.

LVIII.

HAVING said thus much to show the absurdity of assuming, that a system of particular providences is necessary to render the government of God, in the present constitution of the physical and moral world, a just government, as it must indeed be necessary, if the government of a general Providence, according to the established order of things, is unjust; it seems to me, that they who object to this are driven to the greatest of all absurdities. They must either give up their objections, or they must insist, that the whole established order of things ought to be changed, and that God cannot govern mankind with justice, unless he undoes all he has done, and asserts this moral attribute at the expense of his wisdom. To say, as Clarke says, " that the natural order of " things is so perverted, that virtue and goodness " cannot obtain their proper and due effects," is a mere fallacy. He begs the question, and begging the question he affirms untruly. How, and when,

when was the natural order of things perverted? What is every natural order, but that which the Author of nature appoints? and how can it be changed for the better, or for the worse, without a new appointment of his? Are we to believe then, that he has undone his work once already after the fall of Adam, and that he must undo it again, to appear either good or just? To think worthily of God, we must think that the natural order of things has been always the same, and that a Being of infinite wisdom and knowledge, to whom the past and the future are like the present, and who wants no experience to inform him, can have no reason to alter what Infinite Wisdom and Knowledge have once done, as I have hinted above. Again. What are the proper and due effects of virtue and goodness? Nay, what are virtue and goodness themselves? They are not, I believe, independent, nor eternal, but they are real natures, resulting from the system of rational beings, to which they are agreeable, as their contraries are repugnant, and they must, therefore, be as invariable as the system of which they are parts. Thus I think; for the opinion of the independency of any natures on God, or of their coeternity with him, are bugbears to me, who am a child in philosophy, though they are none to such full grown metaphysical giants as Cudworth, Clarke, and others. Now, if virtue and goodness be as invariable as this system, their effects in it must be as invariable as themselves; and, therefore, to say, that they cannot obtain their proper and

and due effects in it, is nothing better than cant. They may not obtain all the effects, which these great doctors in metaphysicks and artificial theology esteem proper and due to them; but they may, and they certainly do, obtain all those, which he, who willed this system and them into being, designed that they should obtain; for if he had designed, that they should have obtained more, he would have proportioned different means to a different end, and man would have been a less imperfect creature than he is.

Could philosophers and divines be persuaded to lay aside the affectation of etching out a little real knowledge with much hypothesis, in matters where hypothesis should be least employed, many things, which are made intricate by this method, would be extremely plain. Thus, for instance, in the present case, let them not assume, that there are natures which exist independently on God, according to which he proceeds, or should proceed; and that we may judge, by a rule common to him and us, the eternal reason of things. Let them not assume, that the moral attributes are precisely the same in God, as they are in our ideas and notions; that they required man should be the final cause of the world, and his happiness the final cause of man. Instead of reasoning from what they imagine these attributes and an eternal reason of things required that God should do, let them be content to know what his infinite wisdom and power have done, and to reason from thence. Let them not assume, in short, what they have no suf-

sufficient grounds to assume, and they will accuse the Supreme Being of injustice no longer.

It may be said, and I know it will be said, that we must assume at least thus much, that God acts always according to the moral fitness of things, or we must assume something worse, we must assume that he acts arbitrarily; and that, on this supposition, we leave ourselves no rule by which to judge of his proceedings, nor to distinguish certainly between a true and a false revelation. Now I am far from denying, that there is an eternal reason. God is himself that reason; and there is no doubt, that he proceeds with his creatures in all the exertions of his power, determined by Infinite Wisdom, according to the fitness of things. But the question is, what are the criterions of this moral fitness relatively to man? I think then, that they are to us, and can be only, that constitution of things, which we call the human system, and the notions which arise naturally in our minds on the consideration of it, or which we are able to deduce immediately and obviously from it. When we keep within these bounds, we are in no danger of being imposed upon, concerning the will of God, nor by any false revelation. But when we go beyond them, we are apt to impose on ourselves; for, to return some of Clarke's words upon him, though there is a natural and unalterable difference between good and evil; yet nothing but the extremest stupidity of mind, or perverseness of spirit, and disregard to truth, can possibly make any man affirm, like him, that

that moral fitnesses and unfitnesses are, even in their applications to our scene of action, (and they will be infinitely less so in their applications to that of God) as manifest as mathematical truths. We may discover moral fitness as we discover natural law, but then we must be on our guard, lest we should pervert our notions of moral fitness and unfitness by wrong applications of them out of our system, as we pervert the principles of natural law by wrong applications of them within it. To suppose, in terms, that the laws of human are the laws of divine nature, would be too absurd, though some writers have done no less. But it is just as absurd, nay, it is just the same, to suppose, that the moral fitness and unfitness of things must be in every instance, whatever it may be in some, exactly the same to God as it is to man. He made our system for us, not for himself; and though we are sure he cannot exact that we should believe or practice any thing repugnant to the moral fitness resulting from it, we must not imagine, that, by abstracting our notions from it, we can render them adequate to that moral fitness which is the object of omniscience, the omniscience of that Supreme Being, who is the author of this, and every other system.

The men, who attempt to do this, leave to God nothing more than they assume to themselves, except a greater degree of power: and even this they assume to be limited of right, by natures as eternal, and as independent as his own, though executed, in fact, repugnantly to these natures.

What these natures are they know as well as he; for they soar up on Platonick wings to the first good and the first just. What his attributes must be to be conformable to these natures, and what they require of him consequently, these persons illuminated by an eternal reason cannot, therefore, fail to know: and they seem to exalt them, as if they meaned only by exalting them to aggravate the want of goodness and justice in the conduct of Providence. Let not this pass for any exaggeration. It is, in plain terms, the sum of a doctrine they teach in the cant of metaphysical theology, to which they have accustomed the ears of men, and by which they impose on their understandings. I desire no better proof of what is here advanced, than the twelfth section of Clarke's Demonstration, and the first of his Evidences. The subject has been often touched in these Essays, and even in some of the last paragraphs, but it may be proper, however, to examine this famous argumentation à priori a little more particularly. It is plausible, for it speaks to the pride of the human heart, and submits the whole œconomy of Divine Wisdom to the judgment of man. But I apprehend, that it supposes some things very doubtful, and affirms others that imply contradiction. I will enter into it, therefore, in this place, further than I have done, and slide or leap from subject to subject, or revert to the same a second, and a third time, in these ill connected minutes, as I used to do in the conversations they are designed to recal.

That

That there is a fitness and unfitness of things to one another, a suitableness and unsuitableness of circumstances to persons, no reasonable man will deny. But I suspect, that many reasonable men will doubt, whether they are founded in natures and qualifications independently on God, and antecedently to his will. They will find it difficult to conceive how fitnesses, resulting from the natures of things, or from the qualifications of persons, can be called antecedent to these things, and to these persons: and yet they must be so, if they are antecedent to that will, by the act of which these things and these persons first existed*. It is said, that the existence of things, and the argument requires that the same should be said of persons, depends on the arbitrary will of God. But that when they are created, and as long as they exist, their proportions, respects, and relations are abstractly of eternal necessity, according to the different natures of things, and the different qualifications of persons, in one common nature. This I take to be the sense and strength of the argument, which will not appear, in my apprehension, very intelligible, nor, as far as it is intelligible, very conclusive.

We consider one thing, or one property, one person, or one qualification, without considering another, and by that we make a very real, and I presume, the sole kind of abstraction our minds are capable of making. But to consider the pro-

* Evid. p. 87.

perties of things, or the qualifications of persons, and the fitnesses and unfitnesses resulting from them, as independent natures existing before there were any such things, or any such persons, any such natures, qualifications, circumstances, seems to me a fictitious abstraction doubly. It assumes, that we have ideas which we have not, and that the modes of being, by which things and persons are what they are, may be conceived as adventitious to them, instead of being conceived as so constitutive of them, that they could not be without the things and persons, nor these without them. By assuming one of these imaginary abstractions, men are led to assume the other, and their mistake about the operations of nature is connected with that about the operations of their own minds.

The modes of being, and the properties of things, are inseparable from them, even in imagination, which might be an argument the more to persuade, that they are the same specifick natures, and that his will, which constituted these natures, constituted at the same time all that is essential to them. But though we cannot separate in this manner, we can take the properties of things, both physical and moral, into distinct consideration. This philosophers have done with honour to themselves, and advantage to others. But when they have been long accustomed to such abstract considerations, and have established certain mathematical and moral truths upon them, some of these philosophers assume, that these general notions

notions are natures independent on God, and in themselves of eternal necessity. God has made triangles and men. But triangularity they say, and they might say just as well humanity, are independent natures; antecedent to his will, and that do not owe their original to arbitrary and positive appointment. That there are necessary truths, mathematical and moral, and that such they must be, as long as there are men, and as the present system of things continues, is certain. But they would not be called, perhaps, eternal truths, nor would these notions be represented like eternal and independent natures, if it was more considered, that the selfexistent Being is the fountain of all existence, and that, since every thing exists by his will, it must exist according to his will; for which reason it seems as absurd to say, that when he made man he could give him no other nature than the human, which was therefore necessarily, not arbitrarily given, as it would be to say, that when he made a man, he did not make a tree. A man with the properties of a tree would not be a man. A tree with the properties of a man would not be a tree. The same will, which made each, made the properties of each. It is one and the same act; and to say that the nature of any thing, or the truths resulting from it, are independent, in any sense, on the will that made them, seems, to me, therefore, to imply contradiction.

Clarke quotes a passage from Plato, wherein that philosopher says, according to his transla-

tion, that "as in matters of sense, the reason why "a thing is visible is not because it is seen, but "it is therefore seen because it is visible: so in "matters of natural reason and morality, that "which is holy and good is not therefore holy "and good, because it is commanded to be done, "but it is therefore commanded by God, because "it is holy and good." If I would cavil a little, I might show, that this quotation does not serve the doctor's purpose, nor prove that Plato was of his mind in asserting, that moral obligations are primarily and originally antecedent to the will of God; if by will be meant his determination, that they should be obligatory, when he made a moral world: and if by will he meant a positive command, signified by revelation, the quotation from Plato, who knew nothing of any such revelation, is strangely absurd. Things may be seen, because they are visible, they are not visible, because they are seen. Let it be so. Does this prove, that the philosopher thought visibility, any more than vision, an eternal independent nature? Might he not think, that God made things to be seen, and creatures to see, and that visibility and vision began when he willed the physical system into existence? Thus again, that which is good, is not such because it is commanded, but it is commanded because it is good. Will it follow from this expression, that good is, according to Plato, an eternal independent nature? Will it not follow as naturally, that good and evil began when God willed the moral system into existence,

and

and that he commanded the former by the laws of their nature, at the same time when he created moral agents capable of either? This remark may serve, at least, to show how apt even the best writers are to amuse themselves, and to impose on others by a mere gingle of words, and to quote what makes against them, or does not make for them.

But now, having made this remark, I am ready to acknowledge, that Plato meaned by this passage in his Euthyphro the first good, that independent nature, which resides among others in his imaginary region of eternal ideas. This should be his meaning, whatever his words in this place import, to make them consistent with his doctrine, and apposite to the present dispute, wherein Plato and the Platonicks run into one extreme, as Hobbes and the Hobbists into another. The former assume an eternal morality, antecedent not only to any signification, but to any actual determination of the will of God. The latter assume, that there was no moral duty, no difference, no distinction made between just and unjust, moral good and evil, till the will of man made this distinction, by civil constitutions, and positive laws. It seems to me, that both these opinions tend to weaken the authority of natural religion. By the first, God published, indeed, a moral law, when he made moral agents. But he was not properly the legislator. The law existed before them, and it binds both him and them. By the second, he has not so much as the appearance of legislature. He made a moral world, indeed, but he made it in confusion, and he left it without any

rule, till at last his creatures made one for themselves. He brought order out of the confusion of a physical, they out of that of a moral chaos. How preferable is the middle opinion between these two extremes, that God instituted moral obligations when he made moral agents, that the law of their nature is the law of his will, and that, how indifferent soever we may presume every thing is to him, before his will has determined it to be, it becomes, after this determination, a necessary, though created creature! Such justice is in man, though in God it may be nothing more than one mode of his infinite wisdom. As long as there are men, this nature must exist. Where it will be, and what it will be, when they and this moral system are at an end, let those able persons, who know so well where and what it was before they both began to exist, determine. If I insist much on this point, I do not pretend to clear it from all the difficulties that lie in the way, neither by what is said here, nor by what has been said elsewhere, nor by what I may say hereafter. There are many on either side, that have perplexed, and may continue to perplex, much better heads than mine. But, in the first place, I feel an insuperable repugnancy to own, that any thing is independent of God; and in the next place, I am shocked at the consequences, that are drawn from this doctrine.

LIX.

He who dares to affirm, that there are eternal selfexistent natures independent on God, is bold enough. But what shall we say to those who dare to affirm, that these eternal natures, resulting from the eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses, agreements and disagreements, proportions and disproportions of things, are absolutely and necessarily, in themselves, what they appear to be to the understandings of all intelligent beings? I do not add the exception, except those who understand things to be what they are not, because it is unnecessary to any other purpose than that of an evasion, which Clarke, like a cunning disputant, foresaw he might want, and did want. What shall we say of those, who think it necessary to bring proofs to show, that God must know what his rational creatures may know concerning these eternal natures independent on him, and who conclude from thence, that the rule of divine and human conduct is the same? God disdains not to observe this rule, it is said, as the law of his actions, and he appeals to men for his observation of it; which matter of fact is asserted on the authority of a chapter in Ezekiel*, where the prophet, like a prophet and a poet, introduces God expostulating with the Jews in this style, and appealing to them for the equity of his proceedings. Bishop Cumberland, who is quoted by

* Chap. 18.

Clarke,

Clarke*, carries these notions still further, when he maintains in his seventh chapter†, with much obscure subtilty, not only, that the rules of this law are the dictates of divine intelligence to God himself, but that the dominion of God over all his creatures is a right derived from these very rules, and from his wisdom, which prescribes them to him. I shall not enter on a discussion, which is not immediately necessary to the present purpose. I shall only say, that the wisdom, as well as the power of God, in the creation, preservation, and government of all things, is, without doubt, a true and joint foundation of his dominion over them, and that there seems to be no need of excluding one of the two, God's irresistible power, in order to obviate the consequences, which the good bishop suspected that Hobbes intended. Let us keep out of these mists, and pursue our subject in a clearer light.

I ask then, if nothing less than infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, and absolute independency, be necessary to make it impossible, that the Supreme Being should be ignorant in any respect of the eternal natures, on which the eternal reason of things is founded, how can it be said with the least appearance of truth, that these assumed natures appear just such as they are absolutely and necessarily in themselves to the understandings of all intelligent beings, and become constantly the rule of their actions? Have we then infinite knowledge, infinite wisdom, and absolute

* Evid. p. 88. † De Leg. Naturæ.

independency?

independency? The human mind apprehends clearly enough the gross differences of things in the moral system, as human sense does in the physical. But in the former, as in the latter, the nicer differences are not so perceptible. We have not any knowledge of the first qualities of substances. It is enough for us to have some knowledge of the second, of those which affect us immediately. It is in vain, that we attempt to go higher in search of scientifical knowledge, and even about these we are very liable to mistakes. Much in the same manner we know something of moral entities, allow me the use of this metaphysical word for once, as they arise in our moral system, and are able to affirm many general truths concerning them. But it is in vain, that we attempt to go higher in our search, or to know any thing more about them than God has shown us in the actual constitution of things; and even when we judge of them thus, and make particular applications of the general laws of our nature, we are very liable to mistakes. We are not liable to these mistakes in such cases only as are very far from occurring frequently, which Clarke affirms, but we are liable to them in such as occur the most frequently, whether they relate to publick or to private life. The contrary laws that legislators have made, the contrary opinions that casuists daily give in matters of morality, wherein some of them must have been mistaken, are evident proofs of this.

That there are things fit and unfit, right and wrong, just and unjust, in the human system, and discernible

discernible by human reason, as far as our natural imperfections admit, I acknowledge most readily. But from the difficulty we have to judge, and from the uncertainty of our judgments in a multitude of cases which lie within our bounds, I would demonstrate the folly of those who affect to have knowledge beyond them. They pretend dogmatically to deduce from abstract eternal natures what these natures require of God, while they are at the same time unable, on many occasions, to deduce, from the constitution of their own system, and the laws of their own nature, with precision and certainty, what these require of them, and what is right or wrong, just or unjust, for them to do. Clarke employs an allusion to evade this objection, which would be extremely pretty, if it did not make directly against him in the present application of it, and the only application that can make it pertinent. There is justice and injustice, as certainly as there is white and black*. But as the painter can, by diluting the two colours, not make them terminate in the midst insensibly, for these words are mere expletives and mean nothing; but as he can make them run into one another till no eye can distinguish them, so the casuist in law or divinity dilutes right and wrong, just and unjust, till no mind, not even his own, can unblend and distinguish them again. If white and black were colours as immutable as they are obvious to human sight,

* Evid. p. 45.

and

and if justice and injustice were abstract natures, immutably obvious to the human understanding, this could not be. But neither are the colours immutable, nor the natures so fixed and so obvious as to be always discerned, and in every light alike. This is what I say, and what the doctor would, if he could, deny. His learned men, his men who understand things to be what they are, not what they are not, blunder about, and contradict one another in matters that are certainly objects of human reason, though they presume to say, that they are guided in their judgments, and directed in their conduct, by the eternal reason of things, by a rule that is common to God and them. I will quote the doctor against himself, on this occasion. I might do so, perhaps, on others. If Lycurgus had made a new law to authorise every man to rob, by violence and murder, whomsoever he met with, such a law could not have been justified. But the law which permitted the Spartan youth to steal, as absurd as it was, may bear much dispute, whether it was absolutely unjust or no. Such an opinion delivered by one, who did not reckon himself certainly among those who understand things to be what they are not, may authorise, or excuse, at least, many that have come out of the school of Loyola, and therefore I think it proper to recal another Spartan institution in this place. The helotes or slaves were made drunk, in order to create an aversion to drunkenness in the youth by such ridiculous spectacles. Far be it from me, and from every

every lover of truth, and of common sense, to wish that the race of metaphysicians and casuists should increase, or so much as continue. But since there are, have been, and will be such men in all ages, it is very reasonable to wish, that they may serve to the same good purpose, that the helotes did at Sparta, and that their delirium, instead of imposing on others, and even infecting many, may be at length laughed out of the world.

It may seem strange to the cool reflections of common sense, that any men, who have the use of their reason, and those especially who would be thought to have cultivated and improved it most, should attempt to persuade us, that complex notions of the moral kind, for I meddle with no other, and such as we call mixed modes, are eternal natures, and independent on God, when these persons must or may know intuitively, that they are dependent on man. I have said already, and I must repeat here, that the mind frames them as it has occasion for them, gives to each a name, and keeps them in store as artificial instruments of the understanding. They exist variously in various minds, nay sometimes in the same mind; but when they exist in no mind, these eternal immutable natures exist no where. Yet such as they are, we are to believe them founded in the eternal fitness of things; we are to believe the moral attributes of God founded in them; we are to deduce from them, and from these attributes, what God is under a moral necessity of doing, and what it is his will that men should do;

do; nay we are to prove in a circle, that there is a God, because there are such natures*, and that there are such natures, because there is a God. These are opinions, which common sense will be hardly induced to adopt, and yet metaphysical and artificial theology teach them. As proud as we are of our rationality, certain it is, that reason, unmixed, uninfluenced, has less to do than we imagine in framing the opinions, and directing the judgments of men.

Let us change the image, and observe that it happens to reason, as it happens to instruments ill tuned. The strings are left sometimes too lax, and are sometimes wound up too high. In one case, they give no sound at all, or one that is lifeless and heavy. In the other, the noise they make is great, it fills the ear, but it carries no true harmony to the soul. By the first we may allude to reason weak and unimproved, by the second to reason strained into all the abstractions of metaphysicks, and we may discern good sense between these extremes, that is, reason at it's proper tone.

There is no subject on which it is more important, that reason should be kept strictly to this tone, than that of the first philosophy, and there is no subject on which it is so liable to be let down below it, or wound up above it. I am not to speak here of the first, of that insensibility and stupidity, wherein a great part of mankind is im-

* See Cudworth of Eter. Moral.

mersed,

mersed, but of that activity of the mind, which raises some of them so far above it. Now among these, they who apply themselves to the first philosophy, apply themselves to the noblest objects that can demand the attention of their mind, to the existence of an All-perfect Being, to the infinite wisdom and power that are manifested in his works, and to the significations of his will, concerning the duties we owe to him, and to one another. From these different subjects arise two kinds of philosophy, divine philosophy or theology, moral philosophy or ethicks. Like different branches of the same tree, they spring from the same root, and that root is the actual system of things. As high as they can be trained up from hence, they bear the genuine fruit of knowledge. But when fantastical gardeners bend the tops of the highest sprigs, like the ficus indica, down to Earth; if they take root, they bear it of a bastard kind, and serve only to plant a labyrinth, wherein the gardeners themselves are lost. Such fantastical gardeners our metaphysicians are. When they have acquired ideas from the actual system of things, and have carried their knowledge up from the creation to that selfexistent, intelligent Being, the Creator, they disdain to reason any longer à posteriori. They frame an hypothesis, with much agitation of their minds, out of the ideas and notions they have acquired in this manner, and reason from it without any further regard to the phænomena. This method of philosophising has produced often nothing more than

than impudent assertions. Such was the theology of the Epicureans, if that may be called so; and that of the Stoicks too, as much as they opposed the former, and as good theists as they were esteemed on this account, was little better.

LX.

WHILE the folly lasted among the ancient philosophers of making universal systems, and of explaining the whole scheme, order, and state of things, he who had not given a great part of his system to theology, would have gained little reputation. This Plato saw, and he put theology into every thing he taught. I can easily imagine, that the same progress was made in composing these spiritual romances, that we see has been made in composing those of a different kind. Amadis of Gaul, and many more, which the niece, the curate, and the barber threw out of Don Quixote's windows, and burned in his yard, were writ without any regard to probability, and no man could read them with any attention, nor suffer his imagination to wander long so extravagantly, who was not as mad as the knight of La Manca. After these writers, la Calprenade arose, like another Plato, and by mixing fiction ingeniously with the truth of history, he composed romances capable of amusing, and even almost of deceiving. But however this may have been, all our metaphysical writers have rather copied, than improved

the Platonick systems, so that if the founder of the academy meaned to distinguish himself by his theology, he has succeeded beyond any hopes he could conceive. It prevailed in the heathen world, and it has prevailed much more in the christian church. Particular men among the heathen embraced it for the same reason that he had to teach it, to distinguish themselves, and to acquire a name in philosophy. Or else they were determined to it, like Plotinus and Porphyry, by an enthusiastick turn of mind, which all the religions of those ages and countries were very proper to give, and theology to confirm. But as soon as an entire order of men was set apart in the christian church, to instruct the world in all matters of a divine or moral nature, and to teach a revelation little different in many instances from Platonism, this philosophy acquired a new strength, and more motives concurred to maintain it than there had been to establish it. The opinions of Plato were employed to illustrate the mysteries of the Gospel, and even to recommend them to the belief of such apologists as Justin, and of such doctors as Austin. No wonder, therefore, that being consecrated in this manner, they have been propagated with christianity, in every instance where they are not directly repugnant to it. No wonder, that theology becoming one of the sciences in lucrum exeuntes, that is a trade, the professors of it have kept up that marvellous which is the mystery of the trade, and to which nothing could contribute more than the metaphysicks of

.... ..Plato.

Plato. No wonder, that the doctrine which we speak of here should still subsist, though it does not seem agreeable to the simplicity of true theism, nor of service to morality, which would not be the duty of every man, if the principles of it could be understood by none but metaphysicians, nor the obligations of it be well explained, without an intricate deduction of arguments à priori.

This the trade, and nothing but the trade, makes necessary; and though we are told, that proofs à posteriori are no more than secondary considerations, I must confess what I have often felt, that if I had not been convinced of all the great articles of natural religion by my own reflections on the infinite wisdom and power displayed in the universe (no part whereof, and therefore not the whole, could be conceived to be selfexistent, even if it were conceived to be eternal) on the constitution of my own nature, and on that of the system to which I belong, I should not have been so by all the fine spun arguments à priori. The proofs that result immediately from such reflections as these are founded in my sensitive and intuitive knowledge, and to resist them I must renounce my clearest and most distinct ideas. I must do little less, I must accept a flow of mere words, thrown into the form of a demonstration, for demonstration; or I must take inadequate, incomplete, and obscure ideas and notions for such as are adequate, complete, and clear, if I admit many of the proofs brought by some of our most famous

writers. They present us with dim spectacles, to see, what we see clearly without any, and by the natural strength of our eyes; or else to see what is not by nature, nor can be made by art visible to our internal sight. They prove as much as needs to be proved, in order to refute atheism, and to establish theism. But then they mingle this real, and connect it with so much fantastical knowledge, that they disgrace and weaken, as much as it is in their power, the former by the latter. It was this very practice, which hindered the Stoicks from beating the Epicureans out of the field of controversy, and from imposing silence on those babblers, the academicians. I apprehend, that our divines have brought the same disadvantage on themselves in their disputes with atheists, to whom they would be much more formidable, if they neither pursued the practice spoken of here, nor made that occasional alliance with them against the dispensations of Providence, which is spoken of above.

To make this conduct appear the less strange, and to take off our wonder at it, we must not only consider, that the religious society is composed of as arrant men as the civil, seduced by the same affections, transported by the same passions, and that our divines have at least as much the ostentation of knowledge, superior to that of other men, as those ancient philosophers had, who pretended that philosophy was the science of all things, divine and human, or the schoolmen who were ready to dispute de omni scibili; but we must consider

consider further, that they assume a right which the ancient philosophers did not claim, though Pythagoras seems to have intended it, a right to instruct mankind in natural as well as in revealed religion, and have made of the exercise of this right a very lucrative trade. To keep this trade in repute, therefore, and themselves with it, two things have been thought necessary, and are really so. It has been thought necessary to preserve the mystery, which they found established in one part by the first professors of it, and to introduce mystery into the other. The method they take serves both these purposes. They slide into the proofs of natural, what they judge necessary to impose their artificial theology. From these principles, laid out of vulgar sight, and, in truth, out of their own, they deduce even moral obligations: and thus the whole sum of religion falls under the direction of the religious society. How this society directs it, and to what purposes principally, appears plainly enough in the instance before us.

LXI.

WHATEVER may be determined about the moral fitnesses and unfitnesses of things, and the suitableness and unsuitableness of circumstances to persons, all of which are conceived to be eternal because we cannot conceive them to have been ever otherwise than they are, certain it is, that they become discernible to us in our system alone;

and that although they are immutable natures in it, from whence all our obligations arise, and may be assumed to be absolutely, and in themselves, eternal, as well as immutable, and, therefore, independent, if philosophers please to call them so; yet we neither know, nor can know any more about them than what the actual constitution of this system shows us. In some other system we might not have had the same ideas, or having them we might not have had the same occasions of collecting them into the same complex modes. This we see happen in different countries, and what happens in different countries might surely happen in different systems. It is sufficient, therefore, to establish our moral obligations, that we consider them relatively to our own system. From thence they arise: and since they arise from thence, it must be the will of that Being who made the system, that we should observe and practice them. The assumed eternity of morality cannot make it more obligatory. Why then are such pains taken to prove it eternal? The reason is obvious. If we went no higher than our own system, the principles of it would be easily discovered, the criterion of moral good and evil, of just and unjust would be fixed, and at least there would be no need of consulting divines about it. They lead the minds of men, therefore, to contemplate objects that are out of their system, and renew the Platonick doctrine of eternal ideas, forms, essences, natures, according to which they assume that the Supreme Being regulates his own conduct,

and

and all his rational creatures are obliged to regulate theirs by the eternal reason of things.

They prove the existence of an All-perfect Being, the Creator and Governor of the universe, and to demonstrate his infinite wisdom and power they appeal to his works. But when they have done this, which includes the whole of natural theology, and serves abundantly all the ends of natural religion, they parcel out a divine moral nature into various attributes, like the human, and determine precisely what these attributes require that God should do, to make his will conformable to the eternal ideas of fitness, which are so many independent natures. Thus they assume, that God knows after the manner of men by ideas, that his moral attributes are not barely names that we give to various manifestations of the infinite wisdom of one simple uncompounded Being, but that they are in him, what they are in us, distinct affections, dispositions, habitudes; that they are in him the very same that they are in our ideas, being derived from the same eternal natures, and known by the same eternal reason; in fine, that we have no need to judge of his moral attributes as we judge of his physical, but are able to determine what they require that he should do, without any regard to what he has done. This is in plain and unexaggerated terms the very doctrine which Clarke and other divines teach, presumptuous and profane as it is, under the disguise of modest and pious expressions. By these they frequently impose on readers, who attend more to

their theological cant than to their meaning, and the necessary consequences of what they advance; while they give other readers a just occasion to say of them what Clarke says of some theists; it matters not at all how honourably they may seem to speak . . . . of God, but what . . . . must needs in all reason be supposed to be their true opinion*.

When we reason humbly and cautiously from the phænomena, we have a sure criterion to guide our judgments, and the undoubted word of God, declared in his works, wherein he speaks most intelligibly to us, to authorise them. When we reason otherwise, not from the phænomena but to them, we have no such criterion to guide, nor any word but the precarious word of man to authorise our judgments. In the place of real, we substitute fantastick natures, and in the place of common sense an imaginary reason of things. This sublime metaphysical reason, which deals so much in abstract ideas, is so imaginary, and by consequence so vague, that it serves the purpose of every divine alike in all their discordant opinions. Metaphysician, I think, never convinced metaphysician: neither is there any thing so absurd, which may not be made in this method problematical: and when it is once made so, the absurdity is called a demonstration. The system of Spinoza, derived at least from that of Descartes, is

* Quasi ego id curem quid ille aiat aut neget. Illud quæro, quid ei consentaneum sit dicere. Cic. de fin. Lib. 2.

very

very absurd, and so are many propositions in that of Hobbes. But there are Spinozists and Hobbists still in the world, as well as Cartesians, and there might be possibly still more, if metaphysical arms alone were employed against them. Let it not be said, that they are men of depraved understandings and depraved morals. This is to rail, not to argue. Their parts and their morals are, no doubt, in general, as good as those of the men who oppose them; and if they conclude absurdly it is because they reason absurdly, as they reason absurdly because they pursue an absurd method: for, to bring this discourse home to the present purpose, the fault is so truly in the method, that this assumed eternal reason has misled theists as well as atheists, to such a degree, that the last are not always the most impious of the two. The opinions mentioned in the last paragraph might stand for sufficient proofs. But there are many more. He who asserts, for instance, on his notions of the eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses, and of the eternal reason of things, that the providence of God in the present state of mankind would be convicted of injustice, if there were only one innocent man unhappy, when it is notorious that there are several, or that God is unjust, because particular providences do not enough distinguish the virtuous from the wicked, is as grossly absurd, and much more impious than Hobbes, when he asserts, that there is no such thing as innocence nor guilt, till they are distinguished by civil laws, and the authority of the magistrate.

He

He who asserts, that predestination of millions to damnation, before they are capable of being either innocent or guilty, is agreeable to the divine attributes, and an exertion of jurisdiction and power not at all repugnant to the eternal fitness and reason of things, in a Being who is not the Governor alone but the Creator of all beings, and has an absolute right to dispose of them as he shall think fit, is as impious as Spinoza, who asserts one sole substance, and who denies, as in effect he did deny, any Creator and Governor of the universe.

The impious doctrine of predestination, such as it has been taught and is still taught among christians, is softened extremely at least, and the assumed proceedings of God toward men are brought almost within the bounds of credibility, by Locke's forced exposition of the famous ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. He understands what is said of the potter, who has a power to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour, out of the same lump of clay, to refer to men nationally, not personally, nor with regard to an eternal state, but to the right which God has of exalting one nation and depressing another, according to his good pleasure and the merits or demerits of such political bodies. This sense may be admitted, while that of a universal and absolute predestination of every individual, such as it is taught, deserves to be rejected with horrour. It may be admitted the better, perhaps, because it is conformable enough to the sanctions

of

of the law of nature. According to these, which regard mankind in general, as the law was given to mankind in general, virtue tends to the happiness, and vice to the misery, of their several societies: and there seems, therefore, no great presumption in assuming, that God does in any particular case, by a particular dispensation, that which is agreeable to the general tenour of his Providence, and to the natural course of things. But it is impious to suppose that he acts, relatively to particular men, against the general tenour of his Providence, and in a manner that shows partiality in his favours, cruelty in his judgments, and an arbitrary spirit in all his proceedings, directly opposite to that spirit of impartiality and benignity, which makes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall, on the just and unjust. Mr. Locke's exposition of St. Paul's text is in the first of these cases. St. Austin's, and that of many divines who had once the vogue of orthodoxy, is in the second. In what sense the apostle understood his own doctrine, I presume not to determine. Thus much is certain, if he understood it as Locke did, he reasoned very rabinically, when he quoted the preference given to Jacob over a much better man, over Esau, and the deliverance of the Israelites, and the destruction of the Egyptians by God for the glory of his name, in order to conclude à fortiori, that the same God might, by virtue of the same power, reject the Jews, who were literally the seed of Abraham, for refusing to acknowledge the Messiah, and call the Gentiles, who

who were figuratively his seed, for consenting to acknowledge him.

I have said already how difficult it is, to reconcile the scheme of particular providences to the general course of nature: and he who considers the many forced suppositions, that ingenious men have made, to get over the difficulty, will be only the more convinced that it is insuperable. This scheme is, indeed, very unnecessary to those who hold an absolute predestination, and since they leave neither freedom of will in man, nor what is called contingency in the course of events, they seem to anticipate any want of particular providences by supposing somewhat still less conceivable. We comprehend as little God's manner of knowing, as we do his manner of being, and we should, therefore, presume to reason no more about one, than about the other. But these men, applying their ideas of human to the divine knowledge, maintain, that God could not foreknow certainly what is to happen, if he did not make it necessary and certain by preordaining that it should happen. So they argue on their notion of prescience. Now it seems, and it has seemed to me ever since I turned my thoughts to subjects of this kind, that the whole system of predestination may be blown up by the change of an improper word. Let us talk no more of prescience, nor imagine things future relatively to God, as they are relatively to man. Let us acknowledge his omniscience, to which the future is like the present, and we may conceive, without any extraordinary

dinary effort of mind, that he knows, though he does not preordain, in the sense of predestinating, the future. If we persuade ourselves of this great truth, that the whole series of things is at all times actually present to the divine mind, we may say as properly, that God knows things because they are actual to him, and not that they are actual to him because he knows them, or much less preordains them; as we say, that things are seen by us because they are visible, and not that they are visible because they are seen by us. They, who talk so much of prescience and predestination, would do well to consider, whether it be not more reasonable to think in this manner, than to adopt all the absurd, as well as impious consequences, that flow from their hypothesis; according to which there must be not one general system of nature, but as many natural and moral systems, as there are rational creatures, and the providence of God must be employed to carry on this aggregate of systems so distinctly and so steadily, that the innocence and happiness of some, and the guilt and misery of others, may be effectually secured, agreeably to their several predestinations.

LXII.

THE fact, that there are such particular providences as have been assumed, which would be so many miracles, in the strict sense of the word, if they were real, cannot be proved; unless we accept

cept for proofs, in an age when miracles are scarce pretended out of your church, and scarce believed in it, all the ridiculous stories that passed in times of ignorance and superstition. I said that particular providences would be miracles, if they were real, and such they would be strictly, whether they were contrary to the established course of nature or not; for the miracle consists in the extraordinary interposition, as much as in the nature of the thing brought to pass. In one case, there could be no doubt of such an extraordinary and miraculous interposition. In the other, doubts might arise, the opinions of men might be divided, and yet the miracle be as real in one as in the other. Nay, the reality might be made evident enough to remove these doubts, by the occasions, by the circumstances, by the repetition of it on similar occasions, and with similar circumstances: and, above all, by this circumstance, that the assumed particular providence was a direct answer to particular prayers and acts of devotion offered up to procure it. Should fire rain down from Heaven to burn one city, and the walls of another fall at the sound of the besiegers' trumpets, should a destroying angel put one army to death in a night, and the sun stand still to give time for the entire defeat of another, neither the besiegers nor the besieged, the victorious nor the vanquished, could fail to see the omnipotent hand of God in these events. Should abundant showers descend from the clouds, after a long drought, or fair weather succeed a wet season, though nothing

thing is more in the ordinary course of nature than these phænomena, they would be esteemed particular providences very reasonably at Paris, if they happened as constantly as the shrine of Saint Genevieve is carried in procession to procure one or the other.

Innumerable cases of these kinds may be put hypothetically; but happily for mankind, experience furnishes no authentick examples of the first sort, nor any well enough ascertained to become proofs of the second. All the instances that can be brought of providences, which men assume to be particular, are so very like to the events which happen in the ordinary course of things, that they fall under the head of such as are problematical, and as are made particular by nothing but the voluntary applications of them. I say happily it is so, for if it was otherwise, if providences were directed according to the different desires, and even wants of men equally well entitled to the divine favour, the whole order of nature, physical and moral, would be subverted, and the affairs of mankind would fall into the utmost confusion. The laws of gravitation, for instance, must be sometimes suspended, and sometimes their effect must be precipitated. The tottering edifice must be kept miraculously from falling, while innocent men lived in it, or passed under it; and the fall of it must be as miraculously determined to crush the guilty inhabitant or passenger. The free will of man, which no one can deny that he has, without lying or renouncing his intuitive knowledge,

and

and which was so much regarded by God, that we are told he suffered Adam to fall, and to involve all mankind in his guilt, rather than restrain it for a moment, for a moment would have saved us from original sin: this free will must be often not only restrained, but determined irresistibly by still whispers, secret suggestions, and sudden influences.

How all this can be effected, and especially in compliances with the wants and petitions of men so different and so repugnant to one another, is not only hard to say, but the very supposition may seem to imply contradiction with what we know of the constitution of things, and with our clearest and most distinct ideas. The affairs of men are connected by so many various relations, that the particular providence, which puts a force on the mechanical laws of nature, and on the freedom of the human will, must do this very often, not in one or two instances alone, but in a multitude, to have it's effect in one. Again. The circumstances of individuals, the publick conjunctures wherein numbers are involved, and the merits and demerits of particular men, as well as of collective bodies, are so nearly alike, and they return so often to be equally objects of these supposed providences, that no one, who does not think himself at liberty to affirm or deny any thing that his precarious hypothesis requires, will dare to pronounce where these providences have been, or should have been employed, and where not. The scheme, if it were true, would be universal in extent,

extent, and continual in time; from whence these great absurdities arise, that the world would be governed by miracles till miracles lost their name, that the established order of natural causes and effects would be subverted, that the general rule would be absorbed in the exceptions to it, or that God would govern his human creatures by two rules, that do not consist very well together, since by one of them the wants and the petitions of these creatures would be submitted to one common providence, which carried on the affairs of the world, according to the first constitution and original laws of it: and by the other, this common providence would break, if I may say so, into a multitude of particular providences, for the supply of these wants and the grant of these petitions, every one of which is an appeal to the second rule of government against the first.

Among other attempts which have been made to solve these difficulties, and to reconcile the assumed scheme to the actual and visible, it has been urged, that God may possibly have so ordered the whole series of things, from the commencement to the consummation of this system*, that all particular cases may have been provided for in the original design, that they may be parts of it, and, therefore, consistent with it. It has been urged further, that the particular natures and actions of all the sons of Adam having been known to God, it is very possible that he may

* Relig. of Nat. Delin.

introduce them into the world at such times, and in such places and circumstances, that they may be, even according to the general course of nature, the instruments or the objects of particular providences. These are very arbitrary suppositions, and such surely as must give little satisfaction to the mind. Without entering further than they deserve upon the examination of them, it may be said, and it may be shown, that they come up very nearly to that of an absolute predestination, and are at least as whimsically invented to this purpose, as that of a preestablished harmony is to another. The example of the planets, which is brought to illustrate one of these hypotheses, will not appear extremely apposite. They are disposed so as perform their dance regularly, in various conjunctions and oppositions, without any new impressions, or any alterations in the laws of motion. But is this the case of moral and free agents? The planets make their revolutions, and maintain their order, by the invariable laws of their system, which nothing but the will of God can alter. They have, in themselves, no principle that can determine their motions in contradiction to these laws. But whether we suppose situations and conjunctures prepared for men, or men for situations and conjunctures, they may act, by the freedom of their will, against all these preparations and destinations in spite of time, place, and circumstance. But God foresaw that they would not, says the metaphysician, and you assert that God may foresee future events without preordaining

preordaining them. Yes, foresee, or rather see, as he knows all the most contingent events that happen in the course of his general providence, but not provide for particular cases, nor determine the existence of particular men, in the manner assumed, without preordaining. Their voluntary actions may coincide with an unpredestinated state of things. But that certain ideal men should come into existence to perform these voluntary actions in such an unpredestinated conjuncture precisely, is a very evident predestination, and as much a particular providence, as if these dispositions, and these conjunctures had been the effects of many miraculous interpositions.

It will be of little service to the scheme of particular providences to say, like Wollaston, that there may be incorporeal, at least invisible beings, of intellects and powers superior to men, and capable of mighty things; and that these beings may be the ministers of God, and the authors of many of these providences; for that there may be, is no proof that there are such beings. To affirm, that we stand in the highest rank of intellectual creatures, would be extreme folly; and to deny that there may be a chain of intelligence, through several systems, up from man, would be to contradict without reason, what reason and analogy render very probable. That such creatures may be the inhabitants of other planets, and dispersed in these habitations, through the universe, is a notion so favoured by appearances, and so agreeable to the majesty of God, and to

the immensity of his works, that no reasonable man will reject, in the present improved state of astronomy, what some of the most ancient astronomers suspected. But the difference is great between adopting an opinion thus founded, and the opinions of ancient astrologers, and of the knaves or madmen who professed theurgick magick. Yet these were the first philosophers who invented such beings as are still assumed. They imposed them on the east, and the east has imposed them on the west. They were not a little embarrassed about their habitations. They placed some in Heaven. These were the angels, or messengers, whom the Supreme Being employed on the most important occasions; and, not to enter into the more perplexed and obscure parts of this doctrine, the greatest number of them were dæmons and genii, who rambled about in imaginary spaces, the intermundia of Epicurus, but principally in our atmosphere, that they might be at hand to take care of men and to direct the conduct of human affairs. But now, admitting that there are such beings, and that they are thus employed; I would ask, do they act by the immediate command of God, or do they not? If you, who defend the scheme of particular providences, say that they do; you leave the matter just where it was, and God governs the world no longer by his general providence alone, but mediately, not immediately, by particular providences likewise, so little consistent with it that they would be useless, if they were not wrought in opposition to it,

it, or to supply the defects of it. If you say that they do not; under how strange a government do you place mankind, when you give any share of it to these beings, and suppose that they exercise it in proper places, and according to their greater abilities!

I neither say, nor think, that divines mean to blaspheme. God forbid that I should be as uncharitable as they are. But this I say, that he who follows them cannot avoid presumption and profaneness, and must be much on his guard to avoid blasphemy. Consider, under one view, their whole proceeding. God made the world, they say, for the sake of man, and he made man only to indulge his goodness in communicating happines to so noble a creature. God preserves the world he has made. Providence presides over all his works, animate and inanimate, and principally over men, those rational beings whom he has created in his own image. But this providence is general, and, therefore, insufficient to answer all the purposes of his goodness and justice in an immense variety of contingent events, and with regard to the merits and demerits of every man. It is essential, therefore, to these, and especially to the last, that there should be particular providences, to take care of rational beings in every particular case, which there are not, and to make a due distribution of good and evil among them constantly, because any one instance to the contrary is inconsistent with God's moral attributes, and shakes the belief of his

existence. He governs, therefore, by particular providences, and provides by them for particular cases that are not provided for in the administration of a general providence. Be it so. All you ask is granted. Are you reconciled to the justice of God's government? Are you satisfied? By no means, reply these divïnes, and such theists as Wollaston. These particular providences are exercised so rarely, so secretly, or some how or other so ineffectually, that his government continues liable to the same charge of injustice, and cannot be reconciled to his attributes, and to the eternal reason of things, without the help of an hypothesis, which it is but reasonable we should make, to distinguish ourselves from the atheistical tribe, and to justify that God, whom we accused in concert with them, while our alliance lasted, and as far as the conditions of it extended.

After this, will it not be permitted me to say, that if these men do not blaspheme directly, little less than blasphemy, nay blasphemy itself, is deduced directly by their allies from the principles they lay down? I will say this at least, that they talk profanely, and argue presumptuously, in very devout, and sometimes in very modest terms. Will it not be permitted me to say, that these men seem to be in the kingdom of God, what the ringleaders of faction are in a state? Men would be angels, and we see in Milton that angels would be gods. The pretensions of men are exorbitant, yet all they demand is presumed to be of right, and whatever falls short of their

their demands to be a denial of a right founded in the original institution of his government by God; for of any original contract or covenant between him and man, except that which the Jews boast he made with their ancestors, we never heard. Though divines talk sometimes of a covenant, which they are pleased to call of grace. To finish this allusion, let me add, that when factions devise expedients to redress the grievances of which they complain, they are commonly such as seem to redress, rather than redress, and as make the sovereign little amends for all the violence they have offered to his prerogative, and for all they have said and done against him.

LXIII.

It is high time that we should have recourse to a better authority than that of man, to the authority of God himself; that we should consider how he has made us, and in what circumstances he has placed us; that we should declare what he has done to be agreeable to his infinite wisdom, and to all his other perfections, because he has done it; and that we should prepare our minds to be grateful and resigned. To lead us then into this track of thought, let it be observed that the phænomena of nature, the greatest and the most minute, establish the doctrine of final causes, and, therefore, the intelligence of the first Cause, by innumerable proofs, which are at all times obvious to our senses. Many of these proofs amount

to geometrical certainty; since a multitude of things, which might be made in manners and placed in positions almost infinite, are so made, so placed, so contrived, that they are visibly appropriated to the particular uses to which they serve, and to no other. If the scheme of particular providences was supported by proofs like these, no reasonable man could doubt of the truth of it. But it is not so supported. The facts are often wholly uncertain, or mingled up with fabulous circumstances, or distinguished, without reason, from those which happen under the direction of a general providence, by superstition and artifice, so that proofs of the falsity of particular providences are in proportion as frequent as those of the reality of final causes. We are justified, therefore, in affirming one, and in not affirming the other, while they who affirm both are justified by their proceedings in affirming neither. They affirm the doctrine of final causes often on proofs which the phænomena contradict, and which the doctrine, established independently of them, does not want. They affirm that of particular providences without any proofs which the phænomena furnish.

The two assumed propositions I have mentioned so often, that man is the final cause of the world, and that the communication of happiness to him is the final cause of his creation, are most certainly false, as the scheme of particular providences, that force the laws of nature, is no doubt, and as that may be which supposes these providences

dences exercised in a manner agreeable to these laws. That the world is fitted in many respects to be the habitation of men, or that men are fitted for this habitation, is true. But will it follow, even from the first, that the world, therefore, was made for the sake of man, any more than it will follow, that it was made for any other species of animals, for all of whom, according to their several natures, it is equally well fitted, and for of all whom we may believe on this account, very reasonably, that it was made as well as for us? It is as well fitted for Bownce as for you, with respect to physical nature; and with respect to moral nature, Bownce has little to do beyond hearkening to the still whispers, the secret suggestions, and the sudden influences of instinct. In the works of men, the most complicated schemes produce very hardly and very uncertainly one single effect. In the works of God, one single scheme produces a multitude of different effects, and answers an immense variety of purposes. Whatever was the final cause of the world, whatever motive (for we must speak after the manner of men) the first Cause had to create it, which motive could not arise from any thing without himself, and must be, therefore, resolved into his mere will; we conceive easily, that Infinite Wisdom, which determined, and Infinite Power, which executed the plan of the universe, had some secondary, some inferior regard in making this and every other planet, to all the creatures that were to inhabit them, though neither any of these creatures, nor all of them, were, in a proper sense, the

the final causes for which these planets were created. When we look down on other animals, we discern a distance, but a very measurable distance, between us and them. When we look up to our common Creator, the distance is immeasurable, for it is infinite. In the first view, as we have some superiority, we are ready to claim a preference due to us over them. But in the second, and relatively to God, we can boast of no such claim. As the distance is infinite from them, so it is from us, to him; for there are no degrees of more or less in infinite.

This reflection alone should have kept philosophers within the bounds of modesty. But neither this reflection, nor a great many others, which inward consciousness and outward observation suggest, have been able to do it. No men have reasoned so dogmatically about the divine nature and perfections, nor have supposed them so much on a level with human conceptions, as the philosophers and divines who have talked the most, and the most inconsistently by consequence, of their incomprehensibility. Some of the heathens asserted the soul of man to be a participation of the divinity, or an emanation from it. Christians have been very little more modest. St. Austin taught, that the soul of man is the highest of created beings, and that there is nothing superior, except the Creator himself: and the philosophers we speak of here teach, that God's manner of knowing, a secret as impenetrable as his manner of being, is the same as ours, that he knows by

ideas,

ideas, and that without them he could not have made, nor could govern, what he has made*. The vanity of being rational, a title they ascribe to God as well as to man, turns their heads. But what is their rationality? The first principles of all their knowledge are not common to God and them, but to them and to the beasts of the field. The improvements they make, on the same principles, beyond their fellow creatures, are owing to this, that they have better, and, perhaps, more intellectual faculties than the others, as the others have better, and, perhaps, more corporeal senses than they have. The reason of this difference seems to be, that such improvements in knowledge are necessary to the well being of men, to their station, and to their destination, as are not necessary to those of other animals. This reason will appear, I think, true, if we consider that as far as these improvements are necessary to the purposes I have mentioned, they are easy; the knowledge we acquire by them is real, and rationality is a perfection in our nature: whereas in proportion to the attempts we make to carry them beyond this point, they grow harder and harder, our knowledge grows less and less real, till it terminates in mere conjecture, or in manifest errour, and this very rationality becomes an imperfection in our nature, or gives, as it gave to Cotta, a pretence to call it so.

This might be illustrated by many examples,

* Vid. Malcb.

by

by that of religion particularly. Man is a religious as well as a social creature, made to know and to adore his Creator, to discover and to obey his will, to conform himself, not to an imaginary abstract reason of things, but to that reason which results from his own constitution, and from the constitution of the system to which he belongs, whereby many things indifferent in themselves, and no way obligatory on other animals, cease to be indifferent, and are obligatory on him. Thus far the principles of religion and the duties of it are easy to be known; and if the one were known, and the other known and practised only thus far, it would have, in great measure at least, it's genuine effect. But men have not been content with this knowledge. Artificial theology and superstition have perplexed the principles, and overloaded the duties of it, till it is grown unintelligible, and in many instances impracticable, or unfit to be practised.

Greater powers of reason, and means of knowledge have been measured out to us than to other animals, that we might be able to fulfil the superior purposes of our destination, whereof religion is, no doubt, the chief. The elevation and preeminence of our species consist in the former alone. But though they are great, they do not take us out of the class of animality; and the metaphysician, who fancies himself wrapped up in pure intellect, and even abstracted from his material part, will feel hunger and thirst, and roar out in a fit of the stone. I am far from thinking

thinking the condition of mankind as unhappy as the same writers, who maintain that the world was made for the sake of man, and man merely to have happiness communicated to him, represent it to be. But yet I am persuaded, and so must every man be who is capable of reflection, that his condition would have been very different from what it is, if the hypothesis of these men had been true. In short, without regard to the exaggerations of the elder Pliny, who makes the human state as despicable as he can, we shall find sufficient reason to say on our own observation of the progress of human life, and not of the beginnings of it only, how mad are men when they entertain such high opinions of their own elevation, and think themselves born to be proud! "Heu dementiam ab his initiis existimantium ad "superbiam se genitos*!

LXIV.

THOUGH God does not govern the world by particular providences, and though it seems to be contrary to what Infinite Wisdom has established that he should, yet we are not, nor has mankind ever been without God, and the evident marks of his Providence in the world. Look back, as far as history and tradition give you any light. Consider the present course of things in the physical and moral systems. Which way soe-

* Plin. L. 7.

ver

ver you turn yourself, you will meet with God, "Deum videbis occurrentem tibi *," and may say to the divine what the good man, whom Socrates mentions in his Ecclesiastical History†, said to the philosopher: my book is the nature of things, which is always at hand when I am desirous to read the words of God: "meus liber, O "philosophe, est natura rerum, quæ quidem "præsto est, quoties Dei verba legere libuerit." What we read in that book is undoubtedly the word of God, and in that we shall find no foundation for a scheme, like this, of particular providences. We shall find that the course of things has been always the same; that national virtue and national vice have produced national happiness and national misery in a due proportion, and are, by consequence, the great sanctions, as it is said above, of the law of nature. We shall find that these sanctions are sufficient, in terrorem, to the collective bodies of men, and that the punishment of individuals is left to the discipline of those laws, which every society makes for it's own sake, and which are suggested by the laws of nature, to prevent, by private punishments, the growth of publick misfortunes. We shall find, that he, who made, preserves the world, and governs it on the same principles, and according to the same invariable laws which he imposed at first. Invariable they are, no doubt: and that difference of events, which gives occasion to the distinction of

* Sen. de Benef. L. 4.

ordinary

ordinary and extraordinary, is nothing more than the natural effect of them. Comets, nay eclipses, were thought to be extraordinary apparitions, that portended extraordinary events, till experience and observation made them familiar, and astronomers began to calculate their returns.

The laws we speak of are so truly invariable, that the same face of nature and the same course of things have been preserved from the first, in Heaven and on Earth, under the direction of the same general Providence. The celestial bodies moved in the same order five or ten thousand years ago that they move now. The inanimate parts of our globe, the vegetable and the animal world, have been constituted, maintained, and propagated in the same manner; and whatever differences the most ancient patriarchs, or the first of men, if they were to come into life again, might find in the works of art, they would find none in those of nature: so that when a great philosopher says, that Adam would find a new world, he must be understood to mean, that the first of men would find a great deal more of the old one discovered, as we say that Columbus found a new world when he discovered America. These laws, though they are invariable, are general too, and as such they admit of much contingency. Matter, as we conceive it, is purely passive, can act no otherways than it is acted upon according to the first impressions of motion that were given by the first mover, and is, therefore, less liable to contingency, because more immediately,

immediately, and more absolutely under the influence of those laws, by which the motion of it, the first of second causes, is continued. The first gleams of thought appear in our animal system, and with them the powers of willing, and of beginning motion. Thought improves, and the exercise of these powers grows more frequent, and more considerable as the system rises. As it rises, therefore, there is more room for contingency of events under the general and invariable laws imposed on the whole kind, or on the particular species. But in no species is there so much room of this sort as in the human. Other animals seem to act more agreeably to the laws, each of his own nature, and more uniformly than man, by that secret determination of the will, which is knowable only by it's effects, like every other kind of force, which we call instinct, and which may answer in natural influences, to what the divines call grace in those that they suppose to be supernatural. This influence, whatever it be, is, I think, more extensive and more durable in other animals than in us. It serves them in more particulars, and seems to have the sole direction of their conduct through life. It has, at least, the principal direction, even in those of them in whom we perceive some glimmerings of rationality, and some partial indications of moral nature.

But now in man, instinct does not more than point out the rudiments of the law of his nature. Reason does, or should do the rest. Reason, instructed by experience, shows the law, and the sanctions

sanctions of it, which are as invariable and as uniform as the law; for in all the ages of the world, and among all the societies of men, the well being or the ill being of these societies, and therefore of all mankind, has borne a constant proportion to the observation or neglect of it. God has given to his human creatures the materials of physical and moral happiness, if I may say so, in the physical and moral constitution of things. He has given them faculties and powers necessary to collect and apply these materials, and to carry on the work, of which reason is the architect, as far as these materials, these faculties, these powers, and the skill of this architect admit. This the Creator has done for us. What we shall do for ourselves he has left to the freedom of our elections; for freewill seems so essential to rational beings, that I presume we cannot conceive any such to be without it, though we easily conceive them to be restrained in the execution of what they will. This plan is that of divine wisdom; and whatever our imaginations may suggest, we know nothing more particular, and, indeed, nothing at all more of the constitution and order of the human system, nor of the dispensations of Providence, than this.

Agreeably to this plan, men have been every where intent to procure to themselves all the physical comforts of life, and solicitous to defend themselves against all the physical evils. In the first, they have succeeded every where so well, that they enjoy, not only the necessaries and comforts, but the luxuries of life;

for there is the luxury of the Scythians as well as of the Sybarites, of Americans as well as Europeans, and of the cottage as well as of the palace. In the second, as in the first, and in every human invention and institution, there is something that is imperfect, something that falls short of the end that we propose, by defect of knowledge, or by defect of power. But even in this, the success of mankind has been great; since they have found means universally, even the most savage have found them, to prevent or to cure many of those physical evils, to which they stand exposed, and to alleviate those which they can neither prevent nor cure. This has been done variously and by slow degrees, but it has always been doing, and distempers were cured and many physical evils averted, before the great improvements of experimental philosophy were made. They are so, even now, in countries where these improvements were never heard of.

Agreeably to the same plan, moral good has been promoted, moral evil has been restrained, and the general state of mankind has been greatly improved in this respect, as well as in the other; though in this respect many more and more frequent contingencies are to be guarded against than in the other, because they arise in the moral system from the most uncertain principle imaginable, the free will of man: and in the other they are such alone as certain laws and an established order of things admit. Physical contingencies are rather apparent than real. But moral contingencies are very real, and yet are

guarded

guarded against so well, and the principles and practice of morality are so well maintained in the several societies of men, that they produce no great disorders in these, and there are on the whole vastly more innocent than guilty persons.

LXV.

I AM not unacquainted with the various refinements of ingenious men, about the freedom of the human will. Some of them have assumed it to be a freedom from external compulsion only, and not internal necessity. Others have assumed it to be a freedom from both; and there are those who assign not only freedom to the will, but a natural indifference, which is not excited to choose, because an object is agreeable antecedently to the choice, but chooses for the pleasure it finds in choosing, and makes the object agreeable by this choice *. The first seem to me to leave neither contingency, nor virtue, nor vice in the world. They establish a universal necessity, of one sort at least. The last seem to me to transfer in some sort to man, what belongs to God. There is an agent, no doubt, who makes things good and agreeable by choosing them, and who is not determined to his choice ab extra, by any preexistent goodness in objects. But this agent is not that passive creature man, who acts, when he does act, according to the contingent impres-

* See King de Orig. Mali.

sions of outward objects on him, or according to those remote objects which his imagination represents to him; for in this scene alone, and a large one it is, free will does, and I suppose can, exercise itself. The second opinion is so evidently true, that I cannot conceive it would have been liable to any contradiction, if philosophers had not done in this case, what they do in many, if they had not rendered what is clear, obscure by explanations, and what is certain, problematical by engraftments.

Into these subtile and perplexed disquisitions I have no design to enter with them. I write to you, and for you; and you would think yourself little obliged to me, if I took the pains of explaining in prose, what you would not think it necessary to explain in verse, and in the character of a poetical philosopher, who may dwell in generalities. But beside this, I have another reason, which would weigh with me on every other as well as on this occasion. I fear to go out of my depth, in sounding imaginary fords, that are real gulfs, and wherein many of the tallest philosophers have been drowned, while none of them ever got over to the science they had in view. Here even Locke, that cautious philosopher, was lost; and here they who have followed and refuted him, like those who went before them all, have succeeded no better, so true is the saying of Montagne, when men attempt to carry knowledge far, " tout finit dans l'éblouissement," the sight is dazzled, and nothing is seen clearly.

Instead

Instead of consulting these writers, therefore, let us consult ourselves. Let us at least attend to them no further, than our inward reflection and our intuitive knowledge confirm their opinions. The material world is an immense scene. Numbers of men, and numbers of ages have been employed to acquire knowledge; and, where this has fallen short, to make hypotheses, sometimes useful concerning the constitution of it, and the laws according to which bodies act on bodies, in order to apply them to the service of mankind. No man's experience can instruct him sufficiently in this science, even for the most ordinary uses of life. Every one must lean on that of others, the illiterate universally, and the most learned in many parts; since no one of them is able to embrace and cultivate alike the whole. But knowledge of the intellectual world is more confined as to the principles of it, and, therefore, less confined as to the persons equally capable of acquiring all the real knowledge, that is to be acquired about it. I say real knowledge; because hypotheses, which are often admitted very reasonably and very usefully in one case, have no pretence to be admitted in the other. Physical hypotheses, which go beyond knowledge, but are founded on it, may be admitted, not only because we must accept probability for certainty on many occasions always, but because when we accept it in these cases, we accept it, as it were, pro interim. None of the phænomena stand in opposition to the present probability, and they lie open

to future discoveries; so that by the same means, by which we attain to this probability, we may attain hereafter to certainty, and, in the mean time, the former can be convicted of no errour. The hypotheses of metaphysicians are very different from these. They are often framed in direct contradiction to the phænomena: and if they are so once, they must be so always; for the phænomena are, in this case, always the same, no new ones arise, and there are no means of further discoveries. The phænomena of our intellectual system lie in a narrow compass, for the whole system is within us, and we have but to turn our eyes inward to have intuitive knowledge of it. Moral philosophers may draw different corollaries from the known operations of the mind, determinations of the will, and motives of human actions: but nothing can be more futile than the attempts of metaphysicians, to show by tedious abstract reasoning, what the internal phænomena in themselves are, instead of appealing to our intuitive conscious knowledge of them. They would not be a jot more ridiculous, if they attempted to demonstrate, most philosophically, to a man whose eyes are open, what those objects are which he sees or may see, at a due distance, and through a proper medium.

I have said something here and there in these Minutes, already, concerning the principles of our moral system, in order to show how it may be, and how it has been improved, and to justify the Providence of God on this head, as well as on that

of

of our physical system. In this place, let it be observed to the same purpose again, that, although the human will be free from external compulsion and internal necessity, yet it is liable to be determined often by sensible and intellectual affections; for I shall not make the distinction Seneca makes, between affections and the principia præludentia affectibus. I am conscious that this is so, for I am conscious that I have determined too often, in compliance with my appetite, and in favour of pleasure, regardless of happiness, not only against my reason in general, but against the immediate, the instantaneous act of my understanding: as I am likewise conscious that I have determined sometimes, and I wish I had done so much oftener, in compliance with my reason, and in favour of happiness, not only against my appetite, but against my appetite excited by an immediate object. I am not more certain that I exist, than I am that all this is true: and since it is true of me, I conclude that it is so, in some degree or other, of all mankind. Now, amidst the contingencies that must arise from this constitution of every individual, in the complicated affairs of this life, and in that diversity of relations in which he stands, I need not go about to prove, that the odds will be always on the side of appetite, from which affections arise, as affections grow up afterward into passions, which reason cannot quite subdue in the strongest minds, and by which she is perpetually subdued in the weakest. Had the all-wise Creator implanted in every

man a moral sense, which may be acquired in some sort by long habits of virtue, and the warmth of true philosophical devotion, but which it is whimsical to assume to be natural; had he done more, had he determined men to the practice of virtue, as he has to the preservation of their beings, by irresistible instinct; or had he appointed particular providences for particular men, to make them good and to reward them for being so; there would have been in the freedom of human will no chance for immorality, or rather this freedom would have been taken from us in all occurrences of a moral nature, by the internal necessity of such an instinct, or the external compulsion of such providences. But no one of these methods, which selfsufficient philosophers have thought it necessary that God should take to secure the moral happiness of mankind, by securing in all events the morality of individuals, has appeared necessary to the purposes of Divine Wisdom. It is plain by the whole course of God's providence, that he regards his human creatures collectively, not individually, how worthy soever every one of them deems himself to be a particular object of the divine care. He has given them indifferently, and in common, the means of arriving at happiness in their moral, as in their physical state; and has left it to them to improve these means, that they may obtain this end.

In this respect he has dealed with them alike in both. But the progress of these improvements is very different. It goes from individuals to collective

lective bodies in one case, and from collective bodies to individuals in the other. Particular men have made discoveries, and invented arts beneficial to the whole species. The generality has adopted them. Their immediate utility has maintained them in practice, and appetite and reason have conspired to set the undivided force of self-love on their side. But our improvements in morality have always had, and must always have a very different progress. Some few particular men may discover, explain, and press upon others, by advice and example, the moral obligations that are incumbent on all. This alone will have little effect, and our moral state will be little improved by it. This improvement therefore, in themselves and in others, is not trusted to the reason of particular men. It is a principal object of the universal reason of mankind. For this purpose governments have been instituted, laws have been made, customs have been established, children have been trained up to morality by education, and men have been deterred from immorality by various punishments, which human justice inflicts. When these means are employed effectually in any society of men, the moral state of that society is happy. When they are employed ineffectually, which must be always the fault of those to whom government is committed, the state of that society is miserable. Individuals are the objects of human justice: societies of men of divine justice. When the former is not exercised effectually, the latter is; and no physical causes produce their effects

effects more naturally, nor more surely, than general depravity produces general misery.

LXVI.

SUCH is the constitution of things, and such the divine œconomy in the government of mankind. God has given us the desire of happiness and the means of attaining to it. He has given us faculties sufficient to discover and to improve these means. What could we ask more of a beneficent Creator? Let us adore his goodness and his justice, (if we will ascribe our ideas of moral attributes to him) as well as his wisdom and his power. Let us give him thanks for bestowing existence upon us, in the system to which we belong; while profane antitheistical writers refuse to own, that he himself exists, unless there be another. Our state, in this world, is a state not of pure but of mixed happiness. As we are material beings, we are subject to generation and corruption, and to many physical evils that arise necessarily from this constitution. As we are intellectual beings, but endowed with very imperfect intelligence, we are liable to much errour, and to many moral evils, that arise from hence, and that we bring on one another. If this were our case, without any thing more, the human state would be very deplorable indeed: and that it is our case we should be induced to think, if we gave credit to the partial representations of divines and atheists;

atheists; one of whom defame, and the other deny, the Supreme Being. But our own experience, our own reflections, and, above all, the excellent writings of those who apply natural philosophy to confirm and improve natural religion, will lead us to God, by sensible demonstrations, much more strongly than the others can lead us from him by metaphysical jargon, and theological declamation. In short, however mixed, and however moderate the general happiness of mankind may be, it is real animal happiness: and he who affirms absolute nonexistence preferable to existence in such a state as ours, like the persons Pliny alleges*, "qui non nasci optimum censerent, aut "quam ocissimè aboleri," scarcely deserves an answer. Let philosophers carry on this dispute as long as they please, it must always terminate in a question not hard to resolve; "whether it was "most agreeable to the wisdom of the Creator, to "make the world and man as they are made; or "to make the former a wheel unfit to roll in it's "place, in the great machine of the universe, "and the latter a creature so superior to his actual rank in the scale of intelligent beings, that "this rank must have been void, and the scale "imperfect?"

That there are other material intelligent creatures, inhabitants of other planets, we have great reason to believe, and none to doubt. As they may be superior to us in their nature and objects,

* Nat. Hist. L. 7.

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in their several degrees less unworthy of the divine munificence, so their happiness may be greater than ours. Yet these creatures, even the noblest of them, must be liable to some inconveniencies at least, both physical and moral. Angels and glorified saints, who are said to live with God, and therefore above the reach of those effects of matter and motion, which are felt in other systems, can be alone exempt from the first: and whether these beings, who are finite still, however glorified, can be exempt from the latter, theology must determine; it is not an object of common sense. Nay theology has already determined it, in the case of those angels and archangels, who were driven from Heaven for their ambition and rebellion against God. Some divines there are, who assume, that the expulsion of these superior beings made room for men; that the Earth is a nursery for Heaven; to which the elect, a competent number of whom will be completed before the end of the world, are to be admitted: and that as creatures of a lower class are encouraged to better their condition by a right use of their faculties, according to this œconomy, so those of a higher, the highest of created beings, are deterred from the abuse of theirs. They may abuse these faculties then: and there may be moral evil, even in Heaven*. But however all this may be, since Infinite Wisdom designed, that there should be various orders of intellectual beings in the plan of

* See Notes to the Treat. de Orig. Mali. C. 5. Sec. 5.

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the universe, differently placed, differently constituted, and some superior to others; it will follow, that nothing can be more absurd than the complaints of creatures, who are in one of these orders, that they are not in another, if, in truth, there are any creatures, except men, unreasonable enough to make such complaints. They complain of their own constitution, and of the constitution of the system wherein they are placed, as loudly as if the Supreme Being was obliged in justice to give them their choice, in some inconceivable manner, how and where they would exist, before he made them to exist. They complain of the uniform conduct of that general Providence, which is over all his works, as if his justice, repugnant in this case to his wisdom, required that he should govern creatures, whom he brought into existence, that they might compose a distinct order, and complete the scale of intellectual being, in a manner that would confound the several orders, and interrupt the scale. Some have condemned the creation, some the government of the world, and some both. The discoveries made, and every day making, in natural philosophy, have shown so many things, which were thought useless or hurtful, to be necessary or beneficial, that a man who should talk like Lucretius and others about the physical world would be at this time ridiculous. But he who talks as extravagantly as Cotta, and many others, about the moral world, is still sure to be heard with attention.

That

Th t creatures should censure their Creator, in the government of the world he has made and preserves, would appear surprising and shocking, if men had not been familiarised with this language. But how should they not be familiarised with it, when the preachers of natural and revealed religion have been the loudest in holding it, though not the first indeed, for they have done nothing more than repeat what all the atheists, from Democritus and Epicurus, have said? Like them, they have insisted much on what they assume that God should have done, and has not done, to promote and secure the happiness of his human creatures; while they have passed over lightly what he has been pleased to do, for both these purposes. I might undertake to prove, that Titus and Trajan were tyrants of the Roman empire as well as Nero, by the same method whereby they attempt to prove, that the Supreme Being is the tyrant of the world he governs. They have pushed such arguments on this subject, and they have pushed them so far, that the whole tribe of these writers, like Wollaston and Clarke, whom I have mentioned, do in effect renounce the God whom you and I adore, as much as the rankest of the atheistical tribe. Your priests and our parsons will exclaim most pathetically, and rail outrageously, at this assertion; but have a little patience, and I will prove it, to their shame, to be true.

That there is room for much contingency in the physical and moral world, under the direction of a general

a general Providence, has been said already; and that, amidst these contingencies, happiness, outward happiness at least, may fall to the lot of wicked, and outward unhappiness to that of good men. But then, this general proposition is of very uncertain application, too uncertain, by far, to be made a rule by which to judge of the dispensations of Providence. There is, generally speaking, less immorality, and less morality, worthy to draw down interpositions of divine vengeance or favour, and more innocence, perhaps, in the world, than is commonly apprehended. But however this be, divines, above all men, have the least reason to insist on the objection taken from the assumed unhappiness of good men, since they cannot do so without manifest inconsistency. That innocent children should be punished to the third and fourth generation for the sins of their guilty fathers, nay that the whole race of mankind should be punished for the sin of one man, they hold agreeable to the justice of God; because they believe on the faith of the Scriptures, that he has proceeded, and proceeds in this manner with mankind. But that men, apparently innocent, should be exposed to any sort of evil, they hold repugnant to his justice; although they affirm on their knowledge, not their belief, that his Providence suffers this to happen in the course of human affairs.

Divines are not only thus inconsistent, they have on another account, and, as preachers of christianity, a worse grace than any men whatever

to

to cry out so loudly against the evil, that happens sometimes to good men. They assert, that the law of grace is much more perfect than the law of nature, and that revelation inspires much more sublime notions of the Deity, and of piety toward him, than reason. But how has it come to pass then, that heathen theists defended the divine Providence against atheists who attacked it, and recommended a cheerful resignation to all the dispensations of it; whereas christian divines have made a common cause with atheists to attack this Providence, and to murmur against the necessary submission that they pay? Admirable precepts and illustrious examples of the first kind may be quoted from paganism. I will mention the first that occurs to me. Seneca, who pleaded the cause of God against atheists, as I plead it actually against the divines, heard the philosopher Demetrius break out in his sufferings into this rapturous expression: "Immortal gods, I have but "one complaint to make: why was your will no "sooner communicated to me? Had I known "it sooner, I would have run to meet what I am "now called to suffer." The passage is so very fine, that it deserves a place not in the margin, but in the text, and to be cited in the original. "Hoc unum dii immortales de vobis queri pos-"sum, quod non ante mihi voluntatem vestram "notam fecistis; prior enim ad ista venissem, "ad quæ nunc vocatus adsum." Few can arrive at this pious fortitude of mind, but we should all endeavour it: and the christian, who goes murmuring

muring and complaining through this life, against the justice of God, deserves little to taste of his goodness in any other state.

Heathen as well as christian philosophers, who believed that all things were made for the sake of man, found it hard to reconcile the phænomena to this hypothesis: and, unless they could do so, they found themselves embarrassed with this hypothesis, in maintaining the existence of an all-wise and all-perfect Being, against the cavils of atheists. The former, however, did their utmost, both on the supposition of a general providence, and of particular providences, to answer all these cavils. They did it too, not only plausibly, but strongly, in many instances, and would suffer, in no case, the hypothesis of a future state, if they did at all admit any such, to unravel the demonstration they had made. The hypothesis might be true: they knew that the demonstration was so. The hypothesis might be true in part only, and relatively to some of the phænomena: they knew that the demonstration was true in the whole, and that the infinite wisdom and power of God were manifest alike in all the phænomena. They might have had an entire recourse to this hypothesis, if they had pleased; for it had been invented early in Egypt and elsewhere; and have attempted to untie by one, the knot they had tied by another, as christian divines have done since. But this doctrine was never firmly enough established in the philosophical, whatever it was in the vulgar creed; and besides, they might think it

insufficient for their purpose in any of the various manners wherein it was taught.

The conduct of christian philosophers has been different from this. Far from defending the providence of God, they have joined in the clamour against it. They have brought him to the bar of humanity: and the selfexistent Being, the first Cause of all things that are, the Creator, the Preserver, the Governor of the universe, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, has been tried, convicted, and condemned, for his government of the world, on the general principles of human justice; like the governor of a province, or any other inferior magistrate. Nothing has hindered, even those who pretend to be his messengers, his embassadors, his plenipotentiaries, from renouncing their allegiance to him, as they themselves have the front to avow, but the hypothesis of another state; wherein it is supposed that he will vindicate his justice, and make amends for whatever is irregular and unjust in this, by punishments and rewards in that. On this hypothesis alone they insist: and therefore, if this will not serve their turn, God is disowned by them, as effectually as if he was so in terms.

Heathen legislators might have reason to add the terrours of another life to those of the judgments of God, and the laws of man, in this. Heathen priests might have reason to support these opinions by the authority of their pretended revelations, and by the mysterious rites of religion. But what reason could theists have, at any time,

time, to pass condemnation on the whole scheme of God's providence, as it is exercised in this world, in order to confirm an opinion by reason, that must stand on the bottom of revelation, or on none? On this bottom it would spread, and prevail as far, and as much, as the revelation itself. We see that it does so both in Christianism and in Mahometanism. On this bottom it would do some good most certainly, and it could do no hurt. The mischief lies in the way of proof. Reason establishes the belief of an all-perfect Being. Revelation supposes it. If we impute any imperfection to this Being, we shake the belief of him. The imputation implies contradiction, and reason is set in opposition to reason. But, on the other hand, some things may be admitted piously, on the faith of a revelation, concerning which we can scarce attempt to reason without impiety. Thus we may believe, that men are to live again in another state, and that they will be dealed with there even with some regard to the use they have made of their freewill here. But to enforce this hypothesis by any attempts to prove, that the dispensations of Providence here are unjust, or to advance any thing concerning the assumed future state, which cannot be reconciled to the divine perfections, is impious and absurd. It is impious and absurd, therefore, to rest the demonstrated existence of an all-perfect Being on an hypothesis, that imputes real injustice to him hereafter, as an expedient to screen him from the imputation of imaginary injustice here: and the divines, who do

this, if they are not atheists, which it is reasonable as well as charitable to believe that none of them are, must be esteemed abettors at least of atheism, by every man who examines impartially their whole proceeding.

LXVII.

METAPHYSICAL writers counsel us sometimes very gravely to silence imagination, that we may attend to experience, and hearken to the voice of reason. The advice is good, and they would neither puzzle themselves, nor perplex knowledge, if they took it as they gave it. But who can forbear smiling, when these very men abandon themselves, at the same instant, to all the seductions and to all the transports of their own imaginations? No men do so more than these, not even the persons of your own tribe: and, as many of their writings, from those of Plato down to some that are very modern, might pass more justly for poems than for philosophical treatises, so was I not in the wrong, when I advised you to suppose rather that Barneveldt or Scriblerus had proved your Rape of the Lock to be philosophical, than to suppose they had proved it to be a political poem. These philosophers are so afraid of ignorance, that they expose themselves to errour, which is worse. What they imagine presumptuously may be, they pass dogmatically for that which is, in matters of the first philosophy above all. You carry on your poetical systems per ambages deorumque

rumque ministeria: and, for this purpose, no other being can be so like to man as a poetical god, nor any intricacies of your marvellous so great as those of imaginary abstractions, imaginary analogies, and delusive sounds, which these men employ to carry on theirs. It is hard very often to discover their meaning, or even whether they have any meaning or no: and when we examine closely what is intelligible in their writings, we find it sometimes hard, and sometimes impossible, to reconcile clearly and consistently many things, that they advance in maintenance of the same system, and in a supposed conformity to it.

This world is called by some the porch or entrance into another. We go from the porch into the house by death; for death destroys not that soul, that self which is the living agent. It destroys indeed the gross material body, or, to speak in the familiar sublime of Socrates, the soul wears out her suit of clothes*. Nay, she was said to wear out so many, in different states, both before and after this, that there was some apprehension taken, lest she should wear out herself at last. They who assert a future state, as well as the present life, connect the two, in some of their discourses, so intimately together, that they assume the moral government of God, which begins in one, to be carried on more perfectly and to be complete in the other. Thus virtue has a sufficient sphere of action, and all the consequences

* See Phæd. in Plato.

of it have time to follow. Good men may all unite with one another, and with other orders of virtuous creatures, and form one blessed society in a future state: nay this happy effect of virtue, in distant scenes and periods, may have a tendency to amend those vicious creatures, throughout the universal kingdom of God, who are capable of amendment*. They who express themselves in this manner, who think that virtue is militant here, and may be and is often overborne, but that it may combat with greater advantage hereafter, and prevail completely, and enjoy it's consequent rewards in some future state, though they think the present a state of probation and trial, cannot think it to be such finally. But the language of divines, in general, is different. Though they are not quite agreed about the eternity of the torments in Hell, yet they are agreed that our state of probation ends with this life; that however we are disposed of from the hour of death to the day of judgment, that judgment will be determined by what we have done in this state; and that the exact distribution of rewards and punishments then made, will, and alone can, set the present disorders and inequalities right, and justify on the whole that scheme of Providence, which appears in the small portion of it, that we see, so inexplicable, so confused, and so unworthy of infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness†.

The first of these theological hypotheses, for

* See Butler's Anal. of Relig. P. 1. C. 3. (1736)

† See Clarke's Evid. Prop. 4.

such they are to reason, independently of revelation, one as much as the other, may be received. Far from accusing directly, and excusing indirectly the providence of God, it does not so much as imply any thing repugnant to the perfections of the divine nature. I do not presume to say, that these perfections require it should be true, nor that my understanding is able fully to comprehend it. But since I may believe it true, though I cannot believe the latter to be so without contradicting the fundamental principles of theism, I embrace with joy the pleasing expectations it raises in my mind. The ancient and modern Epicureans provoke my indignation, when they boast, as a mighty acquisition, their pretended certainty that the body and the soul die together*. If they had this certainty then, would the discovery be so very comfortable? When I consult my reason, I am ready to ask these men, as Tully asked their predecessors, where that old doating woman is, who trembles at the acherontia templa, the alta Orci, and all the infernal hobgoblins, furies with their snakes and whips, devils with their cloven feet and lighted torches. Was there need of so much philosophy, to keep these mighty genii from living under the same terrours? I would ask further, is the middle between atheism and superstition so hard to find? Or may not these men serve as examples to prove what Plutarch affirms, "that superstition leads to athe-

* Se, cum tempus mortis venisset, totos esse perituros.

"ism?" For me, who am no philosopher, nor presume to walk out of the high road of plain common sense*, but content myself to be governed by the dictates of nature, and am, therefore, in no danger of becoming atheistical, superstitious, or sceptical, I should have no difficulty which to choose, if the option was proposed to me, to exist after death, or to die whole, as it has been called. Be there two worlds, or be there twenty, the same God is the God of all, and wherever we are, we are equally in his power. Far from fearing my Creator, that all-perfect Being whom I adore, I should fear to be no longer his creature.

LXVIII.

HAVING said thus much to show why the first of these hypotheses, which I am willing to admit, may be true, though it has no foundation in Scripture or reason, and is purely imaginary, it remains that I show more at large why the last, which I reject on principles of reason, must be on those principles necessarily false. When divines abandon the strong holds of revelation, wherein they are, or should be, made secure, they have no right to expect submission out of their province; and they must be content, when they reason profanely or absurdly, to be sent back to revelation. It is profane even to in-

* Introd. to Princ. of Hum. Knowh (Berkley)

sinuate

sinuate, and much more to affirm peremptorily, that the proceedings of God toward man in the present life are unjust; and if that could be admitted, it would be absurd to admit that this may be set right; which means, if the words have any meaning, that this injustice must cease to be injustice, on the received hypothesis of his proceedings toward man in another life. One is profane, notwithstanding all the questions they beg to support the charge. The other is absurd, on the very principles on which they argue, and according to our clearest and most distinct ideas or notions of human justice.

That a due proportion of reward and punishment, that reparation and terrour are objects essential to the constitution of human justice, will not be denied. That which falls short of these is partial. That which goes beyond them cruel. Men are liable to err on both sides. God on neither. Men may have, therefore, amends to make; God never can: and when we say amends have been made, we imply, that injustice has been committed. Now, as absurd as it appears to say this, when we speak of the proceedings of God toward good men in the other life, we must say it, for we have nothing else to say, if we assume that he has dealed unjustly by them in this life; since it is beyond Omnipotence, to cause that which has been done not to have been done. The happy state of good men in Heaven, according to this bold hypothesis, is not so much the reward of the virtue they practised on Earth, as an act of God's justice

justice against himself, as it were, an act in short, by which he makes them reparation, and an ample one it is, for the injustice he did them here. The miserable state of wicked men in Hell is an exercise of justice delayed, but exercised so severely at last, that it would exceed vastly all the necessary degrees of terrour, if any of these creatures remained after it in an undetermined condition, wherein terrour might have it's effect.

Though reparation and terrour are the essential objects of justice in the punishment of crimes, yet it is not sufficient, that they be made so in general only. Justice requires that punishments, and we must say the same of rewards, the two sanctions of all laws, be measured out in various degrees and manners, according to the various circumstances of particular cases, and in a due proportion to them. Such is the procedure of Providence in the moral government of the world; for though particular interpositions to reward or punish particular men, if there are any, are too rare and too conjectural to pass for rules and measures of his government, and though it be apparent, that the immediate regard of Providence is directed to men collectively, not individually, yet the Divine Wisdom has provided means to punish individuals, by directing men to form societies, and to establish laws, in the execution of which civil magistrates are in some sort the vicegerents of Providence. To them distributive justice is committed, and when this fails to have it's effect, when the immorality of individuals becomes

that

that of a whole society, then the judgments of God follow: and as men are regarded collectively, they are punished collectively in the order of a general providence. This is evidently the œconomy of God's government of mankind in this life. That which it is assumed will take place hereafter, and according to which he will proceed eternally in another life, is the very reverse of this. Every individual human creature is to be tried by the Son of God, that is by God himself, at the great day, in the valley of Jehosaphat. The criminal, who has been justified here, will be condemned there. The innocent man, who has been condemned here, will be justified there. The most secret actions, nay the thoughts of every heart, will be laid open, and sentence will be pronounced accordingly. What now does that justice require, if it may be called justice, when it tends neither to reparation nor terrour, on the principles on which we argue? It requires most certainly, that rewards and punishments should be measured out, in every particular case, in proportion to the merit and demerit of every individual. But instead of this, it is assumed, conformably to the christian revelation and to the doctrine of Plato, that the righteous are set on the right hand of the judge, and the wicked on the left, from whence they are transported to Heaven, or plunged into Hell. They are tried individually, they seem to be rewarded or punished collectively, without any distinction of the particular cases, which have been so solemnly determined,

mined, and without any proportion observed between the various degrees of merit and demerit, of innocence and of guilt, in the application of these rewards and punishments.

I ask the men who maintain, that justice is the same in God as it is in our ideas of it, and who presume on these ideas to censure the Divine Providence, when they see such as they esteem good involved sometimes in publick calamities with such as they esteem wicked, whether this be a jot more repugnant to their ideas of justice, and of the moral fitness of things, whereon they insist so much, than it is to reward the greatest and the least degree of virtue, and to punish the greatest and the least degree of vice alike? The particular rules of justice consist in the distinction and proportion that have been mentioned; and unless they are preserved, the general rules must be of course perverted. I ask what these persons would say, if they beheld a man, who had done some trifling good to society, recompensed like one who had saved his country; or if they, who were convicted of petty larceny, should be delivered over to the hangman, at one of our sessions, with those who had been found guilty of assassination and robbery? It may be said of eternal torments in Hell, that they have been made known to us by revelation, that there are, no doubt, sufficient reasons for them, which we are as unable to discover, as we were to discover that there would be any such torments; but that these reasons not having been revealed, it is in vain to inquire

quire about them, or about the various degrees of beatitude and of misery, wherewith good men may be rewarded, and ill men punished in another life. Now this answer is certainly conclusive on the hypothesis of a revelation, and being so, it should have hindered those divines, who maintain this eternity, from attempting it on arbitrary suppositions, and on such frivolous reasonings as are not only unworthy of infinite wisdom, but even of common sense in a very low degree, what reputation soever the authors of them have had in theology. How comes it to pass now, that the first of these divines account for an eternity of torments, and would and might as well account for the apparently unjust equality of rewards to all the good and of punishments to all the wicked in another world, on the reasonable supposition, that the proceedings of Providence are righteous and just, though determined by reasons incomprehensible to us; and will not suffer themselves to be silenced by the same answer, when they clamour against the justice of the same Providence, because good men are sometimes unhappy, and ill men happy in the present world? With what front can the last of these divines insist on all the trifling reasons they bring to reconcile an eternity of torments to the goodness and justice of an all-perfect Being, or may bring to show that the foolish paradox of the Stoicks and the bloody laws of Draco are agreeable to these attributes, while they reject the arguments, that are drawn from what God has done in the constitution of the human

human nature, against what they assume that he designed to do?

If acts of goodness and mercy carried to excess may become instances of weakness, or of something worse; if acts of severity may become in the same manner instances of cruelty; if the bonds of the former are limited by the proportion necessary to encourage the virtuous, and to excite the vicious, who are capable of it, to amendment; if those of the latter are limited by the proportion necessary to make reparation, and to imprint terrour on the minds of men; if it be arbitrary and tyrannical to make no distinction of persons in dissimilar, as it is partial to make this distinction in similar cases; if all this be agreeable to the clearest and most distinct ideas and notions we are able to frame of justice and equity; and if we are to judge of the conduct of God's Providence in another world by these, as we must be, if we are to judge by these of the conduct of his Providence in this world: if all this be so, I have a right to conclude, that they, who impute imaginary justice to God here, impute very real injustice to him hereafter; and that it is impossible to believe, that such a man as Clarke, to instance no other, could be in earnest, when he affirmed, that an exact distribution of rewards and punishments would be made, by this hypothesis, in a future state, and that such a scheme of providence would appear worthy of infinite goodness and justice, as well as wisdom. He forgot, when he asserted this, or he hoped

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his readers would forget, what he had asserted in another place, by which he deprived himself of the usual evasion, that he and all his tribe employ whenever they assume, that God says or does any thing that it is impossible to reconcile to the divine perfections. He could have no recourse to the incomprehensibility of God's judgments on this occasion. He had asserted, that the moral attributes are the same in God, as they are in our ideas. On this theological, for it is nothing less than a theistical principle, he had joined in the common cry against irregularities, inequalities, and the disorders of this world, on which the charge of injustice against the providence of God is founded. To make this good, he appeals to human understanding. He appeals then to the same understanding, to the same ideas and notions, for the truth and sufficiency of the hypothesis, by which all that is amiss here is to be set right, and the Divine Providence is to be justified on the whole. If the truth and sufficiency of it to this purpose cannot be so made out, the cause of God is evidently betrayed by these men. They plead most strenuously against his justice, and they seem to plead booty for it.

To assume, that the conduct of Divine Providence toward mankind in this world has one criterion, and in the next world another, would be too extravagant. God is the same, his attributes are the same, he can act against them in neither; and if we are competent to judge what they require of him in one, we are competent to judge what

what they require of him in both. Concerning his dispensations in both, therefore, we may argue on our general or abstract notions of human justice, when we defend his providence against the accusations, and even the pretended justifications of it by such a writer as Clarke, who, like another Eunomius, presumes to know God, his moral nature at least, and to teach others to know him, as he knows himself. In arguing with other divines, who are less presumptuous, for some such there are, who do not pretend to reduce the whole œconomy of God's dispensations within the comprehension of human reason, we have another rule, sufficient to combat this hypothesis, and to secure us from errour, one part of which they follow readily, and the other part of which they are obliged, like the rest of their brethren, to evade in particular instances, though none of them dare to reject it avowedly and in general. The rule I mean, is this: first, that we adore the Supreme Being in all his works, and in all the known proceedings of his providence, without assuming any postulata on the strength ofour own reason, which are neither confirmed, nor evidently suggested by them, and which may be set in opposition to the wisdom, goodness, or justice of this Being, by dogmatical reasoners à priori. Secondly, that we admit no proposition to be true, nor any argument valid, which expresses or implies, on what authority soever, the least conceivable imperfection in God. As to the first, the divines we speak of here practise it very laudably, when they

they refuse to raise the importance of man, and the benevolence of God toward him so high, as to affirm, like the others, that he is the final cause of the world, and that the happiness God was desirous to communicate to him was the final cause of his creation; when they take away these principal foundations of the accusations brought against Providence, and show the accusations themselves to be made up of exaggeration, and false representation. As to the second, neither their case, nor their conduct, is the same. In the character of philosophers they are under no necessity of maintaining this hypothesis, nor obliged to excuse that Providence they never accused. But in the character of divines they are under this necessity, and their profession obliges them to defend every part of the system it was instituted to defend. They defend it, therefore, and they find the task of doing so in concert with their brethern much harder, than that of defending the cause of God against their brethren and the atheists in alliance, by showing that there is more good than evil in this world, and that the happiness of mankind is provided for sufficiently in it.

LXIX.

If the immortality of the soul could be proved by physical arguments, the eternity of rewards and punishments would be no necessary corollary deducible from it. But this immortality is a con-

sequence necessarily deducible from this eternity. This immortality, therefore, seems to rest on a moral proof, and an inverted order of reasoning, since if the justice of God requires, that there should be a state of eternal rewards and punishments, the soul of man is immortal certainly, and the same persons, who were virtuous or vicious here, must receive their retribution there. To conceive this personal identity, which is ascertained by our consciousness, and which is known as intuitively as our existence in the present, and must be so in the future state, unless we drink of the water of Lethe by the way, is not difficult surely; and it may be matter of surprise to observe how many scruples have been raised concerning it, by men who seem to embrace the rest of this doctrine without any. The rest of this doctrine is, however, as inconceivable, as this part of it is plain; and whether we suppose that it was derived from an opinion of the immortality of the soul, or that this opinion was derived from it, neither way will it stand the test of reason; for in one case it is founded originally on mere imagination, or on physical and metaphysical proofs, that are insufficient; and in the other, the opinion of the soul's immortality is founded on moral proofs, that are precarious, to say no worse of them yet.

It is said, that this opinion was brought into Greece first by Pherecydes of Syros. But the doctrine of future rewards and punishments had been brought thither long before. It is indeed far more probable, that this opinion and this doc-

trine

trine were imported together by Orpheus, and other ancient poets, though the master of Pythagoras might be the first who writ in prose on these, or on any philosophical subject. But, however this was, it is obvious enough, that they, who believed the immortality of the soul, and future rewards and punishments in another life, did not believe an eternity of torments to be the common fate of the wicked. The priests had reasons of private as well as of publick interest to increase these terrours, and yet in the days of the blindest superstition they tried to reconcile them, by several softenings, to the justice of God, and to the belief of men. The whole mythology of the other world was so absurd, and so confused in itself, and it is come down to us in so many dark and inconsistent reports, that the learned attempt in vain to make out any coherent system of it. Thus much however we know, that while the pagans installed in their choir of the gods some men, whose sepulchres were to be seen on Earth, for the good or great actions they had done in their generations, "viros claros et fortes*," and bestowed on these a sort of sedentary immortality, they held that there was a middle state, wherein they who were neither good enough for Heaven, nor bad enough for Hell, the "animæ sanabiles" of Plato, should be purged, and their state of probation, as it were, lengthened. This Purgatory your church has borrowed: but the heathen di-

* Tully.

vines applied the belief of it to a very theistical purpose, to justify the providence of God in his dealings with men; and your church has made use of this belief to a very mercenary purpose, to bubble the laity, and to enrich the priesthood. We know further that the system of a metempsychosis, according to which the persons, who existed in the human state, had preexisted, and would exist again, after they went out of this, in others; and that the several ranks and orders of beings in Heaven, as well as the several degrees of punishments in Hell, were invented to answer the objections that were made to the government of God in this world, and that might be made to the œconomy of the same government in the next; if it was assumed that all those, who did not deserve to be damned at their going out of this life for what they had done in it, were saved alike, and that all those, who did not deserve to be saved, were damned at the same time in a lump. These hypotheses, and others of the same sort, were very extravagant no doubt; but still they were well intended. They afforded answers at least as good as the objections made to the dispensations of Providence in this life, andthey rendered those of the same Providence in another life less repugnant to the notions of justice.

How great this repugnancy is, and how much reason there is to apprehend, that it should destroy little by little, among men who reason for themselves, and are not stupidly implicit, all those impressions which the belief of a future state is so usefully designed to give; rather than to hope

that the received hypothesis should fortify these impressions, or even preserve them on the minds of such men, two observations will help to show: one of which cannot be contradicted, and the other of which is so easily proved, that, like self-evident propositions, which admit of no proof, it scarce requires any. That which cannot be contradicted is this. As much as christian divines are hampered by some expressions in Holy Writ, there are those among them, who appear very evidently to have disbelieved the eternity of the torments of Hell; for it is too little to say that they doubted about them, or seemed to oppose them: and these are men who bow to none in superiority of parts and learning. Such too there were in the church of old. That which scarce requires any proof is this. They who maintain this eternity are reduced to employ such arbitrary assumptions, such inconsistency in what they advance, and such futility of argument, as they would reproach to others, and be ashamed to employ themselves on any subject that was not theological. The writings of these men are in every hand, and I dare appeal to you, whether you can force your inward sense to admit that eternal torments in another life are consistent with any notions of justice you are able to frame, either because sin is an offence against an infinite Being, and therefore deserves infinite punishment, as if every offence was to be punished, not according to the degree of it, but in proportion to the dignity of the Lawgiver; or because these torments may be a warning to the heathen, whose state of proba-

tion may be extended beyond this life, and must be extended, to make this argument good, beyond the consummation of all things; or finally, for it would be tedious and useless to mention any more, because the damned may grow mad, and not feel their misery, or grow fond of it, in which case, if it was not cruel, it would be absurd to continue their punishments.

Compare the greatest human virtue you can imagine, exposed to all the calamities of life during a term of fifty or threescore years, and recompensed with happiness which exceeds vastly in every instance of it, as much as in it's duration, the sum total of all these calamities, that is, with happiness infinite and eternal. Compare the greatest human wickedness you can imagine, accompanied with an uninterrupted unmingled affluence of every thing, which can go to the constitution of human felicity, during the same number of years, and after that punished in a state of excessive and never-ending torments. What proportion, in the name of God, will you find between the virtue and the recompense, between the wickedness and the punishment? One of these persons has amends made to him beyond all conceivable degrees of a just reparation. The other has punishment inflicted on him beyond all conceivable degrees of a necessary terrour. Again. Suppose two men of equal virtue, but of very opposite fortunes in this life. The one extremely happy, the other as unhappy during the whole course of it. Are these recompensed alike in the next? If they are, there arises such a disproportion

tion of happiness in favour of one of these virtuous men, as must appear inconsistent with justice, and can be imputed to nothing but partiality, which theism will never impute to the Supreme Being, whatever artificial theology may do and does in many instances. Are these two men not recompensed alike? Has one of them a greater, and the other a less share of happiness in that Heaven, to which they both go? If this be said and allowed, the same disproportion, nay a disproportion infinitely greater will remain. The difference must be made by the degree, it cannot be made by the duration of this happiness, which both of them are to enjoy eternally. Now any degree of happiness the more, though never so small, enjoyed eternally, will exceed infinitely not only all the happiness of Earth, but all that of Heaven, which can be enjoyed in any determined number of years. If you suppose two persons of equal guilt, one of whom has been as happy as a wicked man can be, and the other of whom has suffered as much misery in this life as a wicked man can be thought to deserve; the same reasoning will hold good: the disproportion of punishments in one case will be like the disproportion of rewards in the other, and that justice, which is said to be the same in God as in our ideas, will be acquitted in neither. A divine, pressed by such arguments, might have recourse, for aught I know, to something like that balance, wherein it was said that Wollaston affected to weigh happiness and misery even to grains and scruples, in

order to assume, that the additional degrees of happiness in Heaven, and of misery in Hell, cease as soon as the account between the two worlds is made even, and the disproportion taken away; after which the two good men and the two wicked men remain in the different states allotted to them, on an equal foot. This might be said by one accustomed to make hypotheses at random, and without any other rule than his want of them, but I cannot think it would deserve a serious answer.

LXX.

SOMETHING else may be said, that will appear more reasonable at first, and that will be found, on examination, only to set the injustice of the assumed future dispensations of Providence in a still stronger light. It may be said, that although such proportions, as I have mentioned, are included in our notions of justice, strictly taken; yet rewards and punishments do often exceed these strict bounds, without being deemed repugnant to justice, and marks of weakness or of cruelty in him who bestows them, or inflicts them. This now is true in certain degrees, and in certain circumstances, according to which these degrees are to be regulated. Excessive mercy may be vicious, as well as excessive severity, in the judgments of men; and they must be excessive, when the particular proportions, in which they are measured out, exceed by far what is necessary to encourage

courage the good, and to terrify the wicked, the two general objects of justice. The bounds of human justice are straiter or larger, but still it has bounds; and whenever the former are transgressed, the circumstance which justifies this transgression must be some publick good. Such is the nature of human justice, according to which we are to judge of divine justice in our disputes with these men, who say that they are the same.

For my part, who do not think that they are the same in such a sense, as to make us adequate judges of one as well as of the other, I could easily persuade myself, if I admitted this hypothesis, that the mercy and goodness of God stand as it were on one side of his justice, that his mercy pardons the offenders who amend consistently with his justice; for else, as all men offend, all men would be punished; and that his goodness may carry on the work his mercy has begun, and place such as are the objects of both in a state where they will be exempt perhaps eternally from all natural, and, as much as finite creatures can be, from moral evil. I could persuade myself, that they who are objects of neither, and are not therefore pardoned, remain, if they do remain, secluded from the happiness of the others, and reduced to a forlorn state. Some such hypothesis, where no certainty is to be had, I could admit as probable, because it contradicts none of the divine attributes, sets none of them at variance, nor breaks their harmony: for though I fear to pronounce what God will do, and am always astonished at the boldness of those who pronounce

nounce not only what he will do, but what he ought to do; yet I think myself obliged, among the various opinions that are or may be entertained of the divine proceedings, to embrace as probable, if I embrace any, that and that alone which comes nearest to the best notions I can frame of moral perfection. It is not possible for me, therefore, to conceive any attributes standing on the other side of God's justice. No attribute can hold that place, unless cruelty be a divine attribute; which it would be blasphemous to suppose, though the Jews, and some other barbarous people, have supposed it to be so.

To reform offenders is neither the sole, nor the principal end of punishments. Those of an inferior kind may have this intention. Those that are capital must have some other, and it would be too ridiculous to make the hangman, who executes a criminal, pass for the reformer of his manners. The criminal is executed for the sake of others, and that he, who did much hurt in his life, may not only be deprived of the power of doing any more, but may do some good too by the terrour of his death. If a prince or a magistrate tortured and put to death clandestinely, without regard to reparation or terrour, even such as deserved capital punishment, he would be deemed a tyrant; because the principal end of punishment is not obtained by this proceeding; and such a prince or magistrate could have no motive to punish, but the pleasure of punishing, which no spirit but that of anger, vengeance, and cruelty can inspire. A spirit of justice punishes;

punishes; but the judge, who has no other spirit, punishes with regret. If these notions are true, and surely they are true, how can any one, who believes that God is an all-perfect Being, believe at the same time that he does what would deserve the highest censure among his imperfect creatures? None but those, who accuse him of injustice in this life, can believe him so unjust in the next. They make him more unjust than the prince or magistrate would be in the case that has been supposed. If the torments of Hell take place before the consummation of all things, he is as unjust as this prince or magistrate. But if sentence is not pronounced, nor judgment executed, till then he is infinitely more so. Clandestine punishments may have some of the effects of justice, and may contribute in some degree to the reformation of men, or at least to the good of society, by putting out of it such as are hurtful to it. But what effect of this kind can further punishments have, when the system of human government is at an end, and the state of probation over; when there is no further room for reformation of the wicked, nor reparation of the injured by those who injured them; in fine, when the eternal lots of all mankind are cast, and terrour is of no further use?

You will say perhaps, for it is commonly said, that although it be too late, after the consummation of all things, or of the system of this world at least, to obtain the ends of human justice, yet the divine justice remains to be satisfied;

tisfied; and that this cannot be satisfied unless every human creature, who has sinned beyond all measure of pardon here, be punished eternally hereafter. Can this be urged by any one, who has assumed that divine and human justice are the same, and that God appeals to man for the equity of his proceedings; or, indeed by any one else? Sure I am, it cannot be so consistently by the former, nor reasonably by the latter; for though it may be said, to soften this bold assumption, that justice is truly the same in God as it is in our ideas, but that God being infinitely superior to man, an extreme difference must needs arise, in the exercise and particular applications of it, between divine and human justice; yet this will appear to be an evasion in the present case, and not an answer. A prince, or a magistrate, may no doubt very justly, nay it is essential to justice that he should do, what would be unjust and criminal in a private man. The rank he holds, and the power with which he is invested, give him this right: but neither superior rank, nor superior power, can give him a right to pervert justice, nor to act in opposition to those laws of the society, which ought to be the rules of his conduct. Thus the Supreme Being, whose majesty, wisdom, and power are elevated far above all our conceptions, may do justly, in a multitude of instances, what princes and magistrates have no more the right than the power of doing. But then we may presume to say, that there is this similitude between the two cases. Though the right and power

power of the Supreme Being are not delegated, they may be limited like theirs. This I mean. They are limited, if we believe certain divines, by eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things independent on him, according to which he regulates his conduct, and all rational beings are obliged to regulate theirs, because all rational beings are capable of knowing them. But if we reject this doctrine, as, I think, we ought to do, and not without horrour, we must be convinced, however, that the Author of all nature, in constituting our system, constituted certain specifick physical and moral natures, according to which he governs the world: from whence it will follow, that the reasons, on which his Providence acts in the present system of things, may be known to us in some instances, and must be unknown to us in others; while the whole œconomy of any future system must be absolutely impenetrable. We are able to account, in great measure, for the general distribution of good and evil here, though not perhaps for every particular instance. But we are wholly unable to say what will happen hereafter. This only we know, that neither here, nor hereafter, God will deal with his creatures in direct violation of those natures and essences of things, which he himself has constituted, and has given them the means of knowing. He will not deal with them according to one rule here, and according to another hereafter.

As we must believe, if we think worthily of the Supreme Being, that he will not proceed with his human

imperfection, therefore, there must be necessarily some further sanctions of this law, and these are the rewards and punishments of a future state.

Here is ample room for reflections. I shall make but three. The term, "imperfection" is, in this case, employed equivocally; for we may conceive an absolute and a relative perfection, and that, which appears imperfect in one of these considerations, may be perfect in the other, according to the design of the lawgiver. We may presume to say, that, if it had been in the order of God's designs, to make the state of mankind as happy as the universal and steady observation of this law would make it, he would have made the sanctions of the law as perfect as the law. But we see by what he has done, which is the only sure way of knowing what he designed, that we were made to live in a state of moderate and mixed happiness. His law shows us the perfection of our nature, in which that of our happiness consists. Reason draws us to it, affections and passions from it; and our freewill, inclining sometimes to one, and sometimes to the other, maintains that state, which mankind was appointed to hold in the order of rational beings. Had the sanctions of the law of nature been stronger, we should have risen above this state. Had they been weaker, we should have sunk below it. Thus they are relatively perfect, relatively to the design of the lawgiver; and neither the goodness nor the justice of God required, that we should be made better or happier than we are.

But,

But further, if we will suppose any other sanctions necessary to enforce the original and universal law of God, the law of our nature, they cannot be those of a future state. Future rewards and punishments are sanctions of the evangelical, as temporal were of the Mosiacal law. Sanctions must be contained in the law, they must be a part of it. In their promulgation they must precede, as the law does, necessarily all acts of obedience, or disobedience to it; though in their execution they are retrospective to these acts, and are the consequences of them. So likewise new sanctions may be added to an old law by the same authority that made it. But justice requires, that the new be as publick as the old, and that the authority of them be as well ascertained to every one who is bound by the law. These conditions are essential, there can be no sanction without them; and therefore the rewards and punishments of a future state, which have not these conditions, are no sanctions of the natural law. Reason and experience, that taught men this law, showed them the sanction of it. But neither of them pointed out these. Have we any grounds to believe, that they were known to the antediluvian world? Do they stand at the head or the tail of the seven precepts given to the sons of Noah? Were they so much as mentioned by Moses, who had need of every sanction, that his knowledge, or his imagination could suggest, to govern the unruly people to whom he gave a law in the name of God? Were they believed, was that of future

punishments, at least, believed by any of the philosophers of Greece? Pythagoras told strange stories, indeed, of the infernal regions, where he had been in his several transmigrations from body to body; and Plato had his information from Erus the Pamphylian, who came back like a messenger sent on purpose to give an account of this new discovered world. But were they in earnest? It would be ridiculous to think that they were. Both of them affected to be lawgivers, and it is no wonder, that in this character they employed an hypothesis, which other lawgivers had employed with success in those eastern nations, with which they were acquainted.

From such religions, from such philosophy, and from such political institutions, the Jews, who picked up many scraps of all these among the Ægyptians and their neighbours in the east, introduced the doctrine of future rewards and punishments into their own, soon after the captivity of Babylon at least. But whenever they introduced it, this doctrine was not of their own growth most certainly. It was not derived from their original revelation: and accordingly it was not received by that sect, who adhered strictly to the law. Thus we see, that this assumed double sanction, far from being coeval with the law of nature, or any law of God, was unknown long to the nations, who lived under the former, and even to his chosen people, who lived under the latter; and that when it was known, it was plainly of human, not of divine authority.

My

My third reflection is this. As the double sanction of rewards and punishments in a future state was in fact invented by men, it appears to have been so by the evident marks of humanity that characterise it. The notions whereon it is founded are taken rather from the defects, than the excellencies of the human nature, and savour more of the human passions, than of justice or prudence; for Seneca said very consistently, though Plato, whom he quotes, very inconsistently, "nemo prudens punit quia peccatum est, sed "ne peccatur." How worthily soever some philosophers might think of the Supreme Being in this, and in other respects, who did not believe that God spared the wicked in this world in opposition to his justice, that they might have an apparent reason to give for his punishment of them in another world, in opposition to his mercy and justice both; the vulgar heathen believed their Jupiter, as well as their inferior divinities, liable to so many human passions, that they might be easily induced to believe him liable, in his government of mankind, to those of love and hatred, of anger and vengeance. They might attribute these to him in his publick, as well as the others in his private capacity; for according to them, he acted in both: and it is hard to say which of these passions could be attributed to him with greater irreverence. The Jews indeed, as often as they made God descend from Heaven, and as much as they made him reside on Earth, were far from clothing him with corporeity, and im-

puting corporeal vices to him. But the very first and almost every other point of their theology, history, and tradition, showed him in two other capacities, one not so shocking as what the heathens imputed to Jupiter in one capacity, but little less irreverent; for the Creator of all things, the one Supreme Being, was at the same time, according to all these, the tutelary local Deity of a family, and a nation, with whom he entered into covenants, that bound him and them mutually. I need to descend into no further particulars. They are enough known, and extremely suitable to the first principle of this system, which contains such instances of partiality in love and hatred, of furious anger and unrelenting vengeance, in a long series of arbitrary judgments, and bloody executions, as no people on Earth but this would have ascribed, I do not say to God, out to the worst of those monsters who are suffered, or sent by God, for a short time, to punish the iniquity of men. Is it any matter of wonder now, that the greatest part of a people trained up in such notions of the Supreme Being, and of his arbitrary government here, should be disposed to receive a heathenish doctrine, which taught nothing more arbitrary, though a little more cruel, of his proceedings hereafter? Is it any matter of wonder, that they, who believed God inflicted punishments to the third and fourth generation on innocent persons, should believe, that he punished offenders themselves eternally; if even they did not soften this severity by a metempsychosis, or some

other

other way which I do not well remember, nor think it worth my while to examine?

This doctrine was in vogue in the church of Moses, when that of Jesus began. The Sadducees declined, the Pharisees flourished, and the great systematiser of christianity was himself a Pharisee. He, who insists so signally on an arbitrary exercise of the power of God, might have established very consistently this doctrine of eternal rewards and punishments by his Gospel, if it had been established by no other. But it was part of the original revelation; and how absurd soever it might be in the Jews, to take it from the Gentiles, who had taught it without either reason or revelation to authorise them, it might seem reasonable to the christians to adopt it. When the Jews assumed it on the faith of idolatrous and superstitious people, they added a new sanction to an old law. When the christians adopted it, they received the new law, and the sanctions together, on the faith of the same revelation. Thus one objection to the doctrine was prevented, and every man, who entered into the new covenant, knew this condition of it beforehand. But the other objections remained still in force; and on the whole it was found so impossible, to reconcile this sanction of eternal punishments to the divine attributes, and these future invisible judgments of God to the actual proceedings of his Providence, that in the early days of christianity it was rejected by some not inferior to any in knowledge or in zeal.

LXXII.

THE hypothesis of a rotation of souls, out of which even the soul of Christ was not, I think, excepted, at least by Origen, seemed preferable to this. The makers of systems saw, that the general tendency of virtue to promote the happiness, and of vice to promote the unhappiness of mankind, by which God made it the common interest of his human creatures to cultivate one, and to restrain the other, were the sole means that his infinite wisdom had ordained to this end in the ordinary course of his providence; and that if the wicked were sometimes punished, either collectively or individually, by extraordinary interpositions, real or apparent, of the same Providence, this happened rarely, after long forbearance, and not till the measure of iniquity was full. They saw that the mercy of God was in this manner of proceeding as conspicuous as his justice, and that both were directed to maintain such a moral state, as the imperfection of human nature admitted. No wonder then if they found it hard to believe, that the same God, who dealed thus with his creatures here, dealed so differently with them hereafter; and that he, who punished to a gracious end, the maintainance of a moral system, with measure and proportion here, punished to no end at all, when this system was at an end, with inconceivable and eternal torments. They might think, according to the vulgar theological notion, that

that the wrath of God against sinners for what they had done in this system was not appeased when they went out of it. But they might think too, and it is plain they did think, that wrath itself could not exceed all proportion so far, as to appoint a state of eternal torments to succeed a very short state of probation. They mingled therefore some notions of justice with this of wrath, and imagined several states of probation; that souls for instance were sent to inform some bodies in recompense, or punishment, of what they had done in others; that the wicked suffered for their impurity, but that in new states of probation they would have new occasions of purification.

By some such hypothesis they endeavoured to soften a doctrine, that shocked their reason, and could not be reconciled to any moral attribute, no, nor to the physical attributes of God, not to his wisdom at least. But the general tide of artificial theology ran the other way; and time and dogmatical affirmation established absurdity in this case, as they have done in many. Fathers and councils decreed, and christians believed, that the Supreme Being dooms almost all his rational creatures, all whom these men do not think fit to save, to eternal torments for what they have done in this life. He created them, in effect, to be eternally miserable, according to this doctrine, since the term of this life can be reckoned for nothing in an infinite duration, and yet is to decide their state to all eternity. The doctrine we speak of assumes such a proceeding necessary to satisfy

divine justice; whereas in truth it can be ascribed to no principle, but that of anger, and to the revenge of a being, who punishes to the full extent of his power, and merely for the pleasure of punishing, and without any regard to justice, creatures who did not offend him merely for the pleasure of offending him, creatures who had free will, and made wrong elections; creatures who might plead, for that plea the worst of them might make, if not in excuse for their crimes, yet in mitigation of their punishment, their frailties, their passions, the imperfections of their nature, and the numerous temptations to which they stood exposed.

LXXIII.

It is justly matter of scandal, and it would be matter of surprise, to hear men, who acknowledge an all-perfect Being, and who speak with so much reverence of him on some occasions, speak of him with so little on this and others, if we did not observe in general that foolish presumption, with which they are apt to erect themselves into the standard and measure of every thing; and in particular that profane license, which the christian theology has derived from the Jewish, and which divines have rendered so familiar and so habitual, that men blaspheme without knowing they blaspheme, and that their very devotion is impious. The license, I mean, is that of reasoning and of speaking, even in common conversation,

tion, of the divine, as of the human nature, operations, and proceedings; sometimes with, and sometimes without the salvo of those distinguishing epithets and forms of speech, which can in very few instances distinguish enough. The Jewish Scriptures ascribe to God not only corporeal appearance, but corporeal action, and all the instruments of it; eyes to see, ears to hear, mouth and tongue to articulate, hands to handle, and feet to walk. Divines tell us, indeed, that we are not to understand all this according to the literal signification. The meaning is, they say, that God has a power to execute all those acts, to the effecting of which these parts in us are instrumental *. The literal signification is indeed abominable, and the flimsy analogical veil thrown over it is stolen from the wardrobe of Epicurus; for he taught, that the gods had not literally bodies, but something like to bodies, "quasi corpus;" not blood, but something like to blood, "quasi "sanguinem †." This analogy, if it could be allowed, would justify in good measure your Homer as a philosopher, for as a poet he wanted no excuse; and something of this kind has been attempted. But who is there, philosopher or poet, except Jewish and christian rabbins, that can em-

* See Serm. of the archbishop of Dublin, on Rom. viii, 29, 30.

† . . . . Quidni igitur similiter, says Gassendi, fateatur esse in Deo non passiones, sed quasi passiones? atque adeo non irasci illum, sed quasi irasci; nec teneri gratia, sed quasi teneri?

ploy

ploy in good earnest images taken from corporeal substance, from corporeal action, and from the instruments of it, to give us notions in any degree proper of God's manner of being, and of that divine inconceivable energy, in which the action of God consists, and by which the natural and moral worlds were produced, and are preserved and governed? The more human they are, the less adequate they must be; and while they do no good one way, they do much hurt another. They cannot exalt, they must debase our conceptions, and accustom the mind insensibly to confound divine with human ideas and notions, God with man. This happened in the case of the anthropomorphites, who imagined, that God had a human body, because it was said by Moses, that he created man in his own image. So dangerous are these expressions, whose literal sense is obvious to all, while the analogical is understood by few, and attended to by fewer. So false is the reason given in excuse for them, that we must know God this way, or not at all. Far from making us know him better, they lead us into errour. They make us unknow him, if I may say so, and impose an imaginary being upon us for the true God. Other passages of the Scriptures confirmed the errour of the anthropomorphites; and if it was heretical in the christian church, it could not be deemed, one would think, very heretical by the Jews; since they held communion with them so far, as I remember, that they ate the paschal lamb together.

Thus again, and to bring the observation home

to

to the present purpose; the same Scriptures, that are so apt in many places to make those who read them represent the Supreme Being to themselves like an old man looking out of a cloud, as painters have represented him often, ascribe to him at the same time, by the whole tenour of them, all the affections and passions, which characterised the nation of the Jews, while they were a nation, very strongly, and which are not entirely worn out by their dispersion, and their commerce with others. God loves, according to their theology; but he loves with a strange predilection and partiality for them, who are not certainly the most lovely of his human creatures. He loves like Deiotarus, a king of Galatia, who for the sake of one son put the rest of his children to death. He is merciful too, but his mercy is arbitrary, and depends on mere will. "He will have mercy "on whom he will have mercy," and when he will have mercy, and "whom he will, he "hardens." Even they who esteem themselves his chosen people, who, we say, have been hardened, and they say have been chastised, have waited for it these two thousand years, and wait still. Toward mankind in general, his anger is often furious, his hatred inveterate, his vengeance unrelenting. But when the wicked repent of their sins, he repents sometimes of his severity. What a description now is this of an all-perfect Being! What a task have men, several of whom are great masters of reason, undertaken, when they have undertaken to reconcile such doctrines

trines to his perfections, and to other doctrines directly contrary to these, that are interspersed in the same books! The task is hard indeed, but their profession made it necessary; and all the force of great learning, and of great parts, has been prostituted to conceal the ignorance, and to palliate the errours of the most illiterate, superstitious, and absurd race of men, who ever pretended to a system of things divine or human.

LXXIV.

ANALOGY is employed in this case as it is in the other, and indeed in every case where theological paradoxes, which are not a few, are to be defended. If analogy itself, such as some divines assume and represent it, could be defended, there would be no case, wherein it ought to be employed with all it's force more than in this; for, surely, to impute human passions, even the worst of them, to the Supreme Being, is not further off from blasphemy, than it is to ascribe to him a corporeal form, and the sensations, and the limbs, and the actions of a man. It is not true, though it has been asserted, that this analogy is obvious to every one, and that no one can think on reflection, that any of these passions can affect literally the Divine nature *. It is on the contrary as true, that a multitude of good christians,

* See Serm. above quoted.

far

far the greatest number, believe at this hour, that the Divine nature is affected by them, as it is true that a multitude of good heathens represented to themselves their gods and goddesses, even the father of gods and men, under a human form; or conceived at least, which is much the same, that these divinities took the human nature upon them whenever either business or pleasure called them to converse and act with the children of men. Let us not imagine, that any thing is too absurd for men to believe even on reflection. Heathen, Jews, christians, have believed the absurdities I have mentioned; and great metaphysicians and divines have believed this analogy *. It would be tedious to

* The lord president of Scotland, who is no divine by profession, but something better, and more useful to society, deals however too much in divinity; and the contagion of Hutchinson's writings and conversation makes him really mad quoad hoc, for there is such a madness, notwithstanding all his sagacity, good sense, and knowledge. In that strange book, which he has writ in this delirium against Tindal, and which I have quoted somewhere, he says very rationally, "that we ought to be amazed at the impudence of those, "who pretend to decide what God is or is not, and what he "can or cannot do, from the notions they have framed to "themselves of his attributes, his nature, and perfection." But he himself affirms, in the same book, a multitude of facts relating to the Deity, and to the whole œconomy of Divine Providence, on the faith of Jewish and christian severies, and his own or his master's whimsies; just as the others do on the faith of theirs. The censure, therefore, which he passes on them, may be justly passed on himself, unless it can be shown, which it never can be, that what he advances is

to take notice of all that has been said, stupidly enough by some, and not without a little air of plausible ingenuity by others, to establish this notion. I shall say no more about it, than my subject requires necessarily, and even that will be sufficient, I think, to explode a doctrine, that may be turned strongly against revealed religion, and that cuts up the very root of natural.

All the knowledge that God has given us, the means to acquire, and therefore all that he designed we should have of his physical and moral nature and attributes, if they may be considered separately, as we are apt to consider them, and if the latter and every thing we ascribe to these are not to be resolved rather into the former, into his infinite intelligence, wisdom, and power; all this knowledge, I say, is derived from his works, and from the tenour of that providence, by which he governs them. But, be-

is better proved to be true in fact, than what they advance is demonstrated conformable to right reason. Type, emblem, and analogy are the common means to disguise the absurdity both of the facts and reasonings they maintain; the consequence of which is abominable: for the vulgar may very well understand literally, what is pretended to be said analogically only, of the Supreme Being, of his nature, and of his proceedings, in the Bible; since this writer asserts it to be extremely plain, that the language of the Scriptures, which describes the Deity's actions, affections, and inclinations, in terms borrowed from the usage, the sentiments, and resolutions of men, is not so figurative as it is generally supposed to be, and that we ought to understand it something more literally, than reasoners are willing to allow.

cause

cause we cannot frame full and adequate ideas of this sort, nor answer every question impertinent curiosity may ask; will it follow, that we have, properly speaking, no knowledge at all of his attributes, nor of the manner in which they are exercised? Every part of the immense universe, and the order and harmony of the whole, as far as we are able to carry our observations and discoveries, are not only conformable to our ideas or notions of wisdom and power, but these ideas or notions were impressed originally and principally by them on every attentive mind; and men were led to conclude with the utmost certainty, that a Being of wisdom and power made, preserved, and governed the system. As far as we can discern, we discern these in all his works; and where we cannot discern them, it is manifestly due to our imperfection, not to his. God cannot be in any instance unwise nor impotent. This now is real knowledge, or there is no such thing as knowledge. We acquire it immediately in the objects themselves, in God, and in nature, the work of God. We know what wisdom and power are: we know, both intuitively and by the help of our senses, that such as we conceive them to be such they appear in the work; and therefore we know demonstratively, that such they are in the worker.

What then could a very respectable writer* mean, when he said, speaking of divine know-

* Archbishop King, as above.

ledge

ledge and wisdom, that God must either have these, or other faculties and powers equivalent to them, and adequate to the mighty effects which proceed from them? It is plain he meaned by this supposition, in a case where nothing is ascribed but what ought to be ascribed to God, to prepare the way for the same supposition in a case where he was to excuse the Jewish theology, and his own, for attributing in terms to God those affections and passions, which cannot be so attributed without impiety. The archbishop would have had no need to run into those absurdities, nor any temptation to advance some strange paradoxes, that he advanced on the foundation of an assumed analogical knowledge, if he had confined himself to refute one impiety, that of the predestinarians, without attempting to excuse another. Our ideas of divine intelligence and wisdom may be neither fantastick nor false, and yet God's manner of knowing may be so different from ours, that foreknowledge, as we call it improperly in him, may be consistent with the contingency of events, although that which we call properly foreknowledge in ourselves be not so. But he reasons about the essential natural attributes of God, as if he reasoned about those that we call moral, in which way of reasoning there is great and manifest errour. The former are fixed, uniform, and specifick natures, that want no equivalent; and that are certainly adequate, since the mighty effects that are produced proceed from them. They may be perceived more

or

or less in different cases, but in no case will they vary, even in appearance and in human apprehension, from what they are. Like the sun, they may appear sometimes in the effulgence of their brightness, and sometimes behind those clouds, which the eye of human reason cannot pierce. But still, like the light and heat of the sun, though differently perceived, they will appear the same. The latter are not such fixed, uniform, specifick natures to human apprehension. They are rather assumed nominal natures, not manifested by God in his government of the world as clearly and as determinately, as the physical attributes of wisdom and power are in the whole system of his works; but framed into abstract general notions by the human mind to help itself in the moral consideration of human actions, and applied to the Supreme Being, that we may reason more distinctly, if not more truly, about his nature, and the dispensations of his Providence. We ought to attribute all conceivable perfections, without doubt, to the supreme all-perfect Being. We can never raise our conceptions of this kind too high. They will remain, after all our efforts, vastly inadequate. Nay if we suppose them less so, or push absurdity to the utmost and suppose them adequate, yet still they will remain very insufficient criterions by which to judge in many cases, as men presume to do in all, of these perfections in the exercise of them. The reason is plain. God acts according to a multitude of relations unknown to us. He acts relatively to his system, we judge relatively to ours.

Into such opposite paradoxes are divines transported by presumptuous reasoning and whimsical refinements, while they pretend to teach us the knowledge of God and of heavenly things, that some of them affirm dogmatically, and without any regard to truth, which they sacrifice readily to maintain an hypothesis, that the moral attributes are in God just what they are in our inadequate, fluctuating ideas, and that God himself appeals to man for his proceeding conformably to them: and some again are so far from falling into this, that they fall into a contrary extreme, and would persuade us, that the attributes of God are all alike inconceivable to us as they are in themselves, and can be known no way except by analogy; which is not to know them at all: for knowledge, which rests in analogy, stops short, and is not knowledge. The first of these opinions has done infinite hurt to all religion, and has turned it into superstition every where, and in every age. The last has not been of much service to christianity, as I apprehend; and sure I am, that it will leave the objection made to the Jewish Scriptures on account of the images under which they represent the Supreme Being just where they find it.

Here let us draw one line of separation, among others, between natural and artificial theology. By that we are taught to acknowledge and adore the infinite wisdom and power of God, which he has manifested to us, in some degree or other, in every part, even the most minute of his creation.

tion. By that too we are taught to ascribe goodness and justice to him, wherever he intended that we should so ascribe them, that is, wherever either his works, or the dispensations of his providence do as necessarily communicate these notions to our minds, as those of wisdom and power are communicated to us in the whole extent of both. Wherever they are not so communicated, we may assume very reasonably, that it is on motives strictly conformable to the divine attributes, and therefore to goodness and justice, though unknown to us, from whom so many circumstances, with a relation to which the Divine Providence acts, must be often concealed; or we may resolve all such cases into the wisdom of God, and, resigning ourselves to that, not presume to account for them morally. Thus we follow God, and pretend to have knowledge of his moral character, no further than he gives it; no further than these abstract or general notions, which we collect from the proceedings of his Providence, are confirmed by the same.

LXXV.

But we are taught a very different lesson in the schools of artificial theology. In them all the notions of those obligations, under which men lie to one another by the constitution of their nature, are tranferred to God; and an imaginary connection between his physical and moral attributes is framed by very precarious reasonings à

priori; all of which are founded on that impertinent supposition, that moral fitnesses and unfitnesses are known, by the eternal reason of things, to all rational beings as well as to God. They go further. As God is perfect, and man very imperfect, they talk of his infinite goodness and justice as of his infinite wisdom and power, though the latter may preserve their nature without any conceivable bounds, and the former must cease to be what they are, unless we conceive them bounded. Their nature implies necessarily a limitation in the exercise of them. Thus then the moral attributes, according to this theology, require infinitely more of God to man, than men are able, or would be obliged, if they were able, to exercise to one another; greater profusion in bestowing benefits and rewards, greater rigour in punishing offences. This whole system of God's moral obligations, or of divine ethicks, being raised à priori, and not à posteriori, is a system of the duty of God to man: let the blasphemy of this expression be charged to the account of those who make it proper and necessary to be used in order to expose their doctrine. It is a system of what he ought, or is obliged by his attributes to do; and not a scheme of what he has done. It prescribes to God, and the dispensations of his providence are acquitted or censured as they are conformable or not conformable to it.

The makers of this system have gone still further, and have attributed to the Divinity not only the perfections, but the imperfections of humanity.

nity. Superstition improved by philosophy succeeded that which was rude and unsystematised; and learning and knowledge finished what ignorance had begun. When they saw, that the constitution of things, and the order of Providence did not answer the notions of goodness and justice in all the extent, in which they thought it was fit to ascribe these notions to a Supreme Being, contrary notions stood ready to take the place of these; and, since they could not ascribe them all to one, they ascribed them to several divinities. From thence a good and an evil god, the ditheism of philosophers. From hence that universal polytheism, a principal use of which was to account for the phænomena of nature, and for the government of the moral world. The moral characters of pagan divinities differed, like the moral characters of men; and to make these characters complete, the same passions were ascribed to both: one nation, nay one man was favoured by one god, another by another; and as there were parties on Earth, there were parties in Heaven. But here we must distinguish between the theology of the Jews and that of other nations. The Jews, with more inconsistency and not less profanation, dressed up the one Supreme Being in all the rags of humanity; which composed a kind of motley character, such as foolish superstition and mad enthusiasm alone could ascribe to him, and such as no man, who believes him to be an all-perfect Being, can hear without horrour.

The most barbarous nations had the most bar-

barous deities generally, and the gods seem to have been civilised no faster, than their adorers were, and even not so fast, nor in the same proportion: for we know by experience, that superstition can maintain barbarity in religious policy, among those who are the farthest from it in civil. The ancient Chinese, it is said, represented the Supreme Being, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, for so they called him, as the giver of all good*, as an object of adoration and of gratitude, to whom their emperors offered up the first fruits of the corn they had sowed with their own hands. But the ancient nations, of whom the histories and traditions with which we are better acquainted speak, represented the divine nature like that of their own tyrants. The divine favour was to be obtained by importunate supplications, by magnificent presents, and by all the external show of service and pomp of adulation. Their gods too, like their tyrants, were prone to anger, and hard to be appeased. Nothing less than bloody sacrifices of beasts, of men, of children, could appease them; and the notion of rendering them propitious by putting other creatures to death being established, we are not to wonder, if the greatest offenders grew the most devout. In this respect they had better quarter from gods than men; though Seneca says, that it cost more to assuage the wrath of their gods, than the rage of their tyrants; "ut sic dii placentur, quemadmodum ne "homines quidem sæviunt."

* Scien. Sin.

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If we would own the truth, we should be obliged to own, that this kind of propitiation is much more repugnant to all our notions of justice, than any of those instances of supposed injustice, which divines and atheists charge on God; and yet it continued to be the constant practice of the Jews, at the same time as they boast, that God was their king, and relate the terrible judgments, that he executed, and that they executed by his command, or with his approbation, personally on one another, and personally for their own sakes on other people. Thus they blended together at once, in the moral character of God, injustice, cruelty, and partiality. They made him an object of terrour more than of awe and reverence, and their religion was a system of the rankest superstition; for nothing can be more true, than what St. Austin quotes somewhere from Varro, that they who are religious revere, and the superstitious fear God*. The saint would have done well to have applied this true maxim to certain abominable doctrines of his own, and to have learned from a heathen to correct his own theology. But the truth is, that christianity preserved in many respects a strong tang of the spirit of Judaism, as Judaism had taken, and incorporated in the first institution of it, many of the rites and observances at least of Egypt: for I will not say, that the legislator, who was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, took the belief of one God from the doc-

* Varro ait, Deum a religioso vereri, a superstitioso timeri.

trine of the Theban dynasty, as different in that respect from the polytheism of the other Egyptians, as that of the Jews was; though I might suspect, that he did so much more reasonably, than a very able writer insinuates, that the Jews might instruct other nations in the most excellent philosophy, and that natural religion was originally built on the religion revealed to them*. The ceremonies of the law of Moses in the worship of God were retrenched, and a more inward devotion, a more reasonable service were established: though even this devotion and this service retained an air of that enthusiasm, which prevailed among the prophets, or preachers of the Jewish church, on whom the Spirit of God was supposed to descend. The Supreme Being took a milder appearance several ways among christians. His favour was confined no longer to one people; all mankind were construed by this new theology to be of the seed of Abraham, and they were all included in the new covenant. The Messiah came, and God did for fallen man what he could not do for fallen angels, according to a remark of archbishop Tillotson. He sent his only Son, who is one and the same God with himself, into the world, to suffer an ignominious death, and by that sacrifice to redeem all the sons of Adam from the consequences of his wrath, which the sin of Adam had entailed on the whole race of mankind. Christian theology discovers in this mysterious

* See Def. of Revealed Rel. by Conyb. p. 406.

proceeding,

proceeding, the love of God to man, his infinite justice and goodness. But reason will discover the fantastical, confused, and inconsistent notions of Jewish theology latent in it, and applied to another system of religion. This love will appear partiality, as great as that which the Jews assumed that he had in preferring their nation to all the nations of the earth. This justice will appear injustice in all the circumstances of the fall, and in the redemption of man by the propitiatory sacrifice of an innocent person. This goodness will appear cruelty, when it is considered, that the propitiation was made by tormenting and spilling the blood of the victim; and in short, injustice and cruelty will appear inconsistently united in this circumstance, that mankind could not have been redeemed, if the Jews had received, instead of crucifying the Messiah; and yet that they were rejected then, and have been punished ever since, for not receiving, and for crucifying him.

On the whole, the moral character imputed to the Supreme Being by christian theology differs little from that imputed to him by the Jewish. The difference is rather apparent than real, and if the effects of sudden and violent anger are imputed to him in one system, those of slow and silent revenge are imputed to him in the other. The God of the Old Testament rewards and punishes visibly and signally here: he terrifies often by his anger, he reforms sometimes. The God of the New makes little difference here between those whom he approves, and those whom he disapproves;

proves; so little, that he is charged with injustice for it: but he lies in wait to punish the latter hereafter with unrelenting vengeance and eternal torments, when it is too late to terrify, because it is too late to reform. Divines would be therefore under a double obligation to reconcile these passions to the idea of an all-perfect Being, if that was possible. But because it is impossible, they take the part of denying, against the express terms of their Scriptures, that he has any such passions. They quote contradictory passages, which were designed*, they say, to make us understand, that these representations are imperfect, and to keep us from imagining, that the things spoken of are in the same manner in God, in which any of these passages express them: as if inconsistency could preserve from errour, or be an excuse for it. They say very truly, that it would be absurd to understand the representations literally: but they argue very precariously, when they conclude from thence, that they were not intended to be so understood. Is it less repugnant to human reason, to ascribe the human passions to the divine nature, than it is to impute to God many other things, which our theology imputes to him? I recal them not in particular. This only I will say, and you must own, that it cannot be hard to conceive, how the Jews and the first Christians came to entertain such absurd notions, by any man, who considers that in the most unlightened ages,

* Archb. King, ubi. sup.

and

and at this hour, the greatest part of the christian church believes, that the same propitiatory sacrifice, which Christ offered upon the cross, is daily offered up for the living and the dead on ten thousand altars at once, and that they eat and drink the very same body and blood. Well might the Jews and the first Christians believe in contradiction to their reason, when an infinite number of learned men and great philosophers believe in contradiction to their reason and their senses both.

We have observed above how this nostrum of analogy is applied to purge off the literal meaning of those passages, which ascribe to God the form of man. Like a mountebank's panacæa, it will have no better success, when it is applied to purify those, that ascribe the human passions to him. Archbishop King*, for I think it worth my while to quote no other writer in favour of analogy, answers the objection made to this doctrine, "that, "if it be true, all religion may be lost in mere "figures," by saying, "that there is great difference between this analogy and what we call "figure. That the use of the last is to represent "things, otherwise well known, so as to magnify, "or lessen the ideas we have of them, to move "our passions, and to engage our fancies; by "which means they are often employed to deceive us. But that the use of divine analogy "is to give us notions of things where we can "have no direct knowledge." Now it seems to

* Ubi. sup.

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me, that analogy is figure, or it is nothing; and that if it is figure, it is of the kind of those which are employed to deceive us. The use of figure is not only to illustrate, and adorn things known, but to help our conceptions, and to introduce things knowable into the mind. When it is not employed to any of these purposes, to the first by orators and poets, or to the last by philosophers, figurative style is silly unmeaning talk, or it is imposition and fraud. We may be deceived by it, no doubt; but we cannot be deceived long, if the use of it be confined to things that are knowable by us. He who is not able to tell us without any figure what he means by the figure he employs, will neither deserve nor have the attention of men of sense; and, besides, in matters that are knowable by us, we may discover the propriety or impropriety of it by our own researches.

The case of analogy is very different. It is a similitude or resemblance of an object with some diversity, as the school-men say very intelligibly. But then the assertors of it say, that this object is not to be known otherwise by us, and that we must be content to know it this way, or not at all. If this assumed divine analogy differs from other figures therefore, it differs in this, they cannot deceive long, this may deceive always. No, says theology: it never can deceive, because these analogical notions of the divine nature are communicated to us by God himself in his Word. But who does not see, that this falls into the absurdity mentioned above? A theist doubts of the authenticity

ticity of this Word, because such notions are contained in it. A divine justifies the notions, because they are contained in it. To want external proof sufficient to constitute this authenticity, and to have internal proof turned against it, would be too much. The weaker the former is, the more necessary it becomes to defend the latter. But then it is defended by so many arbitrary assumptions and forced interpretations, that a Bible, without a comment, can be reconciled neither to itself, nor to what we know of physical and moral nature; and that, with a comment, it is in a multitude of instances the word of man, rather than the word of God. There are not only things mysteriously but things untruly expressed in it. In one case, God has so little regard to the weakness of our capacities, that his language is far above all human conception: in the other, it descends to that of the most illiterate ages, and of the most ignorant people among whom these Scriptures were writ, compiled, or published. In the former, we are told, that he designs to exercise our faith, which is the angular stone of every instituted religion: in the latter, that he was pleased to speak according to vulgar errour, that he might be the better understood; as if the Supreme Intelligence, the God of truth, could stand in need of an expedient, to which no philosopher would think himself reduced.

LXXVI.

LXXVI.

It is strange to observe, that such a writer, as archbishop King, should recommend his favourite analogy as the proper and necessary, the usual and general method of teaching and instructing mankind, and of leading them to knowledge, after he has assumed over and over, that all our knowledge of the divine nature and perfections rests on these notions solely, and can be carried no further. When we are instructed by analogy, by comparison, by figure in one word, on other occasions, it is in order to arrive at the knowledge of matters knowable. Knowledge, that was to rest in these, would not be deemed knowledge, nor even that which we might think we acquired by reasoning from them; for demonstration canno arise from real, and much less from assumed similitude or figure. It must be established on intuitive or sensitive knowledge. The reason is obvious. Similitudes may be assumed, and figures employed falsely. We must go beyond them, and reason independently of them, to know whether they lead us to truth or not; for the anger of God may be as improper an image as that of his hands and feet, and there may be, as doubtless there is, in one representation no more proportion nor resemblance than in the other. Analogy consists of some similitude and some diversity. As fast as we perceive this similitude and this diversity, it may help us to prove; but of itself,

self, and without this comparison, which cannot be made when the object is unknown, it can neither prove, nor help us to prove. The right reverend author I have quoted so often is fond of an example or two, one of which turns against him, and the other makes nothing for him.

To the man, who is a stranger to any country, we produce a map of it. The map is only paper and ink. It is not the country, it has very little likeness to the country; yet this analogy gives him notions, and as much knowledge of the country as serves his present purpose. Now in the first place, though it be true, that the map gives him the notion of a new country, it is equally true, that the map gives him no new notion. He knew what mountains, and valleys, and lakes, and rivers are, before he saw the map; and all he learns by it is, that there are such in this unknown country: so that the comparison shows, much against the intention of the writer, if it shows any thing, that the human passions, with which we were acquainted long before the analogical map was spread before us, are the same in God that they are in us. The strokes and lines of the map do not show us Highgate, nor the Thames; the mountains may be higher, the rivers deeper, but they are mountains and rivers still, and the nature and the face of the country are much the same. In the next place, the map was made by persons who had been on the spot, or by the communication of exact memorials from them, and they to whom it is of the utmost consequence

sequence to know this knowable country may resort to it, and verify or correct the map, instead of trusting to men who know the country no better than they do, or who may have an interest to deceive them.

Another example is taken from our sensitive knowledge of outward objects. The sun, for instance, gives us by his effects the ideas of light and heat; but what they are in themselves, or what the physical nature of the sun is, we know not. Just so, the direction of God's providence in the government of the world gives us the ideas of anger and revenge; but what these are in themselves, or what the moral nature of God is, we know not. This comparison may seem plausible perhaps to some persons. But it will not hold. Whatever light and heat are in themselves, the simple ideas that we distinguish by these means are raised by the action of the sun immediately, and uniformly. But the complex ideas of anger and revenge are not so raised by any act or direction of Providence. Disagreeable sensations, or pain, may be immediate effects of such acts or directions; but the moral causes of these are of our own invention. They are not uniformly assigned neither, as they are not immediately nor determinately known; for the same appearances, which are ascribed to God's anger or revenge by one man, and at one time, will be ascribed to his justice, or even to his mercy, by another man at the same time, or by the same man at another time. In all these cases, the physical causes are alike unknown

unknown in themselves, and in the manner of their operations. They are determined only by their effects. Now to argue, that, because we admit these, which are so determined, we ought to admit moral causes, which are not so determined, is something too sophistical. To conclude this head by bringing an example against analogy much more to the purpose, than those that are brought in favour of it: the man who was born blind imagined, most analogically, a similitude between the sound of a trumpet and the scarlet colour. He substituted the idea he had for that he had not, and reasoned from thence just as well about scarlet, as some men reason from their ideas of anger and revenge about the moral causes that are latent in the divine mind.

It is said, that we can have no direct knowledge of the nature of God: which is true in this sense, that all the knowledge we can have of this kind is derived originally from his works, and the proceedings of his providence. All the ways of acquiring a more direct knowledge by archetypal ideas, which we discern in an intimate union of the human with the divine mind, by the irradiations of mystick theology, or by the inward light of Quakerism, and several more, which the phrenzy of metaphysicks, not very distant from that of enthusiasm, has invented, are too ridiculous to deserve the regard of common sense. But though we have not, in any of these ways, a direct knowledge of the nature of God, yet we are not reduced to know something of him except by ana-

logy. If the first principles of our knowledge concerning him be reflected, as we have just now said, yet it is real. It is carried into demonstration, and is therefore direct likewise; if we may be allowed to call any knowledge by demonstration direct. What we can see of him within the extent of our horizon, we see clearly. He judged this sufficient for us, he gave us to see no further by that lamp of reason, which he has lighted up in our minds; and with this, little as it is, we ought to be content. But the divines spoken of here light up their dim taper of analogy, pretend to show us the shadows of objects they cannot discover, and bid us be content with this. They go further. They assert, that this is sufficient for us, and though true religion be the most reasonable service, they make it the most unreasonable servitude: for thus they argue*. "Men honour and "obey a prince whom they never saw, and whom "they could not distinguish from another man, "if they met him. Let us suppose God to be "such a prince literally, as he is represented "analogically. Let us suppose him to love those "that obey his orders, and to be in rage and fury "against the disobedient. Can we doubt, that "he who believes this will be saved by virtue of "that belief?" Thus you see, that they make at last even their own analogy unnecessary. We may conceive him, by their leave, under all the gross and repugnant images, that have been employed to represent him in the Jewish Scriptures. We

* King, as above.

may

may conceive him to be a mighty King, that sits in Heaven, and has the Earth for his footstool, from whence all things that can happen are in his view. Or we may conceive him, like an eastern monarch, carried about in his palanquin, neither seeing his subjects, nor seen by them, familiar with a few of his favourites, terrible to all the rest of his people, and known only by the pomp with which he is served, and by the severity of his government*. The man who thinks, that every circumstance in the Mosaical history of the creation and of the fall is to be understood literally, should think, indeed, that every representation which the Scriptures make of God is to be understood in the same manner; since there can be no reason given against interpreting some of these circumstances literally, and some figuratively, that will not hold against interpreting some of these passages one way, and some another. To be consistent, he should disclaim the analogy he contends for; and then nothing more will be wanting to answer all the ends of artificial theology, than to assume on such premises, that they who minister in holy things are the omrahs, the viziers, and the bassas of this mighty King, whose commands they publish, interpret, and execute, or cause to executed; rather than his embassadors: by assuming which latter character they may seem to lessen overmodestly the dignity of their own order, and to raise that of the laity too high.—But I am ashamed to have said so much on this subject.

* See King in his Serm. on Gen. ii, 16, 17.

LXXVII.

I might have concluded sooner, that an analogy arbitrarily assumed is not sufficient to excuse the literal attribution of those human passions to the divine nature, which are the disgrace of ours; that there is little or no difference in reality between one and the other of these attributions, whatever there may be in appearance, to an inattentive or prejudiced mind; and that anger and revenge were ascribed by the Jews to the Supreme Being, as literally as compassion and mercy, as literally as injustice in this life is ascribed to his providence by atheists and divines, or the justice of it in another is asserted by the latter. The false conceptions, and the licentious reasonings about the divine nature and Providence, that have been mentioned, as well as many more, proceed chiefly from the doctrine, which teaches, that the moral attributes are the same in God as they are in our ideas, that the eternal reason of things, by which he acts, is open to all rational beings; and consequently, that we are competent judges of his moral proceedings toward us, since we are competent to determine what his moral character requires. But these false conceptions and licentious reasonings may proceed likewise from the analogical doctrine, as contrary as it appears to the other; for by ascribing to God not human notions and passions, but something, whatever it be, equivalent to these, King might, though he does not, reason as dogmatically as Clarke, à priori, from what the Creator

tor and Governor of the world ought to do in those qualities, to what he has done, which is condemned, and to what they assume he will do, which is justified, and rendered his sole justification. On such conceptions, and such reasonings, the doctrine of future rewards and punishments has been established, as it is still taught. Had it been taught in terms more general, and less descriptive, had the punishments been represented, for instance, like the rewards, to be simply such as eye never saw, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man could conceive; it might have been maintained in credit, and have had a universal and real influence perhaps, to the great advantage of religion, even since the days of superstition and ignorance were over. But beside the absurdity of supposing, that God inflicts eternal punishments on his creatures, which would render their nonexistence infinitely preferable to their existence on the whole, as every one who has not the rage of paradoxes about him must admit; I apprehend, that an air of ridicule has been cast on this doctrine by preserving all the idle tales, and burlesque images, which were propagated in those days, and have been preserved in these by the united labours of nurses, pedagogues, painters, poets, and grave divines. I need not enumerate instances. They are enough known, and they have done so much to take off the solemnity, and to weaken the authority of this doctrine, that the man, who was induced to disbelieve a God by serious and pathetick discourses against his goodness and justice in the government of this world, would

be hardly reclaimed to theism by an hypothesis, which resembles so nearly that mythologia de inferis he had laughed at so often.

Since our divines have thought fit to risk the belief of an all-perfect Being, the Creator and Governor of all beings, on this hypothesis, they should have made it at least as plausible to the reason of mankind, as their objections are made in some degree to his reason, though much more to his affections and passions; and on which they have appealed, in concert with the atheists, to this reason, and even to experience. They should not have shown themselves so much more concerned for this hypothesis, than for the fundamental demonstrated principle of all religion, as to make, if they could, the hypothesis pass in some sort for the demonstration, and the demonstration for the hypothesis. They do little less, when they attempt to prove, that there is no God, if there is no future state; instead of insisting, that, since there is a God, there may be a future state. The Stoicks asserted*, that, if there was a God, there was divination; and if there was divination, there was a God. "Reciprocantur ista: si di-"vinatio sit, dii sunt; si dii sint, divinatio est." Tully might have added in their name, "si divi-"natio non sit, nec dii sunt." But the heathen philosopher was on this occasion a better theist, than such a christian divine as Clarke.

Another observation equally true, but not quite

* Tully de Divin.

so obvious, requires to have it's place here, and to be a little more developed. Natural religion is that original revelation, which God has made of himself, and of his will, to all mankind, in the constitution of things, and in the order of his providence. Whatever is thus revealed is within the reach of our faculties; and the same reason, which he has given us to improve the physical, he has given us to improve the moral system of our lives. Neither of them is improved equally; of which many apparent causes, and some that would be thought perhaps too refined and too hypothetical, may be assigned. But they who apply their reason the most to these improvements, provide the best for their own well-being both here and hereafter, on the supposition of a future state. It would not be hard to show one less instructed than you are, that human reason is able to discover, in this original revelation, every conceivable duty, that we owe to God as our Creator, and to man as our fellow-creature. It would be easy to show, that this system of duty is fully proportioned by Infinite Wisdom to the human state, and to the end of it, human happiness. Natural religion is therefore relatively perfect; and if it was so unrelatively, it would be very imperfect. It is therefore immutable as long as God and man continue to be what they are, as long as we stand in the same relations to him, and to one another. God cannot change; and to suppose that the relations of mankind to him, or to one another, may, or have changed, is to assume

arbitrarily, and without any proof, that can be urged in a disputation of this kind. If it does not follow necessarily from hence, sure I am it follows probably, that God has made no other revelation of himself, and of his will to mankind. I do not assert, that he has made no such particular revelations, as I did not presume to assert, that there are never any particular interpositions of his providence: but this I will assert, that if he has made any such, the original and universal revelation must be the foundation, and the criterion of them all. Let it be, for argument's sake, that God, who knew from all eternity what the state of mankind, and of every society of man would be at every point of time, determined to deal out his revelations by parcels, as legislators are forced to make new laws, and new rules of government, that are adapted to circumstances unforeseen by them; instead of making a system of moral law, when he created moral agents, that might answer his whole purpose in all circumstances of time, place, and persons; just as he made a physical system of laws for the other part, the inanimate part of his creation. Let this be assumed, for argument's sake, though it be not in any degree so agreeable to the notions of infinite knowledge and wisdom as the contrary opinion: it must be assumed at the same time, that there is nothing in any of these posterior revelations inconsistent with the first, even in appearance, and to our apprehensions; or it must be assumed, that God himself, the Supreme Wisdom, is inconsistent, or

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gives occasion to his rational creatures to think that he is so.

I reason very unwillingly, and not without a certain awe on my mind, when I presume to speak of what God may or may not do, as familiar as this practice is to many. But if it be free from presumption in any case, it is so when we endeavour to expose that of such men as these, and may be said rather to refute their doctrines, than to advance dogmatically any of our own. I speak in this manner when I say, agreeably to the most clear and distinct ideas I can frame, that as God, the Supreme Truth and Reason, can neither pronounce nor imply any thing that is false or absurd in condescension to our capacities; so he will, in condescension to these capacities, make no revelation to us by his word, which shall be even in appearance, and to human apprehension, inconsistent with what he has revealed of himself, and of his will, by his works. This revelation, and all that is contained clearly in it, is an object of knowledge. Other revelations, which we assume to be made by his word, and which we receive on the word of man, are objects of belief. Now it would be repugnant to the Divine Wisdom, that he should perplex our knowledge in one case, or weaken our belief in the other, by suggesting inconsistent ideas of his nature or his will. You will have learned perhaps to say, that things, which appear in a posterior revelation inconsistent with the first, would not appear such, if we could comprehend them clearly and fully. But you will

will unlearn this lesson, if you consider, that the common distinction of things contrary to reason, and things above it, cannot be employed on this occasion to any purpose that will avail. If things contained in any assumed revelation are inconsistent with the religion of nature, they are most certainly contrary to reason, since the religion of nature is collected by reason from the known constitution and relations of things, and from the known order of Providence. They are therefore to be rejected. If the things contained in any such revelation be above reason, that is, incomprehensible, I do not say in their manner of being, for that alone would not make them liable to this objection, but in themselves, and according to the terms wherein they are communicated; there is no criterion left by which to judge whether they are agreeable or repugnant to the religion of nature and of reason. They are not, therefore, to be received: and he who insists, that they should be received independently of this criterion, falls into the absurdity already mentioned. He supposes them reconcilable to the original revelation God has made in his works, because they are contained in his Word; whereas it is incumbent on him to show, that these very things are so many internal proofs of the authenticity of this revelation, by showing that they are all reconcilable to the other. Divines themselves agree to this, or they mean nothing when they take so much pains to reconcile them to it, in order to conclude, according to their usual method, that a thing

a thing is, whenever they imagine they have proved that it may be, or have said enough to make others believe so.

It has been made a question, whether God can, consistently with his goodness, his justice, or even with his wisdom, give such secondary revelations, as are assumed on particular occasions, or without any occasion and sufficient reason for them; and whether he can, consistently with the same attributes, after leaving his human creatures for a great number of ages under the law of their nature, by which nothing but morality was prescribed, and nothing but immorality forbid, impose new and positive precepts, the precepts of mere will? The question has been agitated with equal presumption on both sides, perhaps; and certainly with much sophism, and more evasion than argument on one side. I enter not into it. I stand on the ground I have already made, and insist, that the law of our nature is perfect, relatively to our system, and must be immutable as long as this system continues. I insist, therefore, that it cannot be altered: but I may admit, for the point is not clear enough to oblige me to it necessarily, that things entirely and exactly consistent with it may be superadded to it by the same divine authority, though not in a manner equally authentick; and that positive precepts may be given about things which are indifferent by the law of our nature, partaking neither of morality nor immorality, and which become obligatory as soon as they are enjoined by such positive precepts.

cepts. Notwithstanding these concessions it will remain true, that every instituted religion is dependent on natural religion, and should be made subservient to it.

They all boast that they are so, but experience shows, that the very contrary is true. They consist chiefly of articles of faith, that go far beyond all the knowledge we can acquire; and of external rites, ceremonies, and positive duties, that have no relation to those of the moral kind, which are all included in the precepts of natural religion. Now it is true in fact, that to believe these articles of faith, and to practise these external duties, are reputed in all these religions the most essential parts of them: so that a good man and a devout man may be always different, and are often opposite characters; so opposite, that I suspect no two characters would be found, if they could be nicely examined, in a great number of persons to go together so seldom. This might be exemplified in many instances, but in none more strongly than in that of the Jews. No nation so exact in observing fasts and feasts, and so superstitiously zealous in the practice of every ceremony of a law that abounded with ceremonies. But no nation so unhospitable at the same time, no people so uncharitable, nor so absolutely strangers to that fundamental principle of natural religion, universal benevolence.

LXXVIII.

LXXVIII.

It were much to be wished, that the same reproach could not be made in any degree to the professors of christianity. But I apprehend, that they too must pass condemnation on this head. The doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments was established, no doubt, in the christian, as in every other system of instituted religion, to enforce natural, that is, the first, the most authentick, and as we may say, the mistress of all religions, since they should be all subservient to her. But this doctrine is applied in every communion of christians, as much to enforce matters of metaphysical speculation, or positive duties, or forms of worship, which are neither parts of natural religion, nor have any necessary connection with our moral obligations, as it is applied to enforce these. The mistress is set on a level with the servant, and the same regard is paid to one as to the other. But why do I say the same, when it is manifest, that much more regard is paid in many instances, and in the application we speak of here particularly, to the latter than to the former? Metaphysical speculations, positive duties, and forms of worship, can have no merit any further than they contribute to maintain and improve in our minds an awful sense of the majesty of the Supreme Being, of our dependence on him, of our duties to him, and of the moral obligations under which we lie to our fellow creatures: and

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as far as they contribute to these purposes, whether they are of human or of divine institution, they have great merit, and are of great importance. Their merit and their importance, however, cannot be equal to those of the religion they are designed to maintain and improve: and yet we find them treated by the doctors and professors of christianity as if they had more of both, as if this part of instituted religion could be substituted in the place of that part of it which republishes natural religion, and could supply the want of it.

The clergy, who have taken the distribution of future rewards and punishments into their own hands, distribute them according to this rule. The man who has been a bad son, a bad husband, a bad father, a bad citizen, who has passed his whole life in the practice of private and publick immorality, languishes on a sick bed. Conscious of guilt, he apprehends punishment, and all the terrours of Hell stare him in the face. He repents, therefore, may signify in this case nothing more than this, he is afraid; and so will the most hardened villain be at the foot of the gallows. It is too late to amend, too late to repair the injuries he has done. The priest, however, who gave the terrour, is called to administer the comfort. The man confesses his sins, makes an orthodox profession of his faith, joins in the prayers that are said over him, takes leave of the world with all the decorum which the discipline of his church requires, and dies. We are bound to believe well

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of this man's salvation, and we commit his body to the ground, "in a sure and certain hope of "his resurrection to eternal life." The man who has passed his whole life in the practice of every moral virtue, and has lived up to the duties of natural religion in every relation, and in every station, has fulfilled by consequence all the obligations of revealed religion, as far as the latter is designed to republish and enforce the former. But the latter is designed more immediately, and preferably for another purpose: and therefore the hope of Heaven is held out to one man, notwithstanding his wicked life; the fear of Hell is held out to another, notwithstanding his good life on several occasions. Faith unimposed, and forms and ceremonies unprescribed by natural religion, may atone for the violations of it; but the strict observance of it cannot atone, in any communion, for the want of faith even in matters that have been much disputed among christians, and that are so still in other communions; nor for the neglect of forms and ceremonies, that are of mere human institution, and that have varied frequently, as all such institutions must and do vary by their own nature, and by the nature of those who make, and of those for whom they are made. To bring an instance or two, that occur to me first out of many. Read the creed of Athanasius, and then consider, that the man we suppose in this place, who has conformed his whole life to the precepts of natural religion and of reason, cannot be

be saved*, but must perish without doubt everlastingly, unless he believes faithfully such a rhapsody of jargon, as talapoins and bonzes would be hardly brought to avow, as wants a sufficient foundation in the Gospel, as none but factious priests, who meant to divide, not to unite, could have combined to propagate, as none but the least reasonable, and the most implicit set of men could have received for truth. Consider again, that the trite ceremony of baptism, instituted by the Heathens, practised by the Jews, and adopted by the Christians, is made so essential a part of religion, under the vague name of a sacrament, that neither the moral goodness of men, nor the innocence of children, can secure their salvation, unless they have passed through this mystical washing: without which, and the graces consequent to it, the good works of the former are not pleasant to God, but have the nature of sin; and the innocence of the other is infected by that original taint, which spread from the transgression of Adam, and corrupted human nature in all his posterity.

These are principles of artificial theology, and such is the ecclesiastical distribution of future rewards and punishments in all christian communions. I wave descending into particular examples taken from the east or the west, from your church or from mine. This difference only I would observe between the two last. You acknowledge still a spiritual monarch, the vicar of Jesus Christ on Earth, and an infallible judge in all mat-

* Thirty-nine articles.

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ters of religion, to whom you ascribe a supreme ecclesiastical authority. At least the royalists prevail among you, and the partisans of spiritual liberty are few. We have thrown off this ridiculous but heavy yoke, and thus it is more easy, and therefore more frequent to impose new doctrines, new rites, new ceremonies in your church, than in mine; to save, to beatify, to sanctify whom his Holiness pleases, and to pronounce as many arbitrary sentences of damnation as he thinks fit. Thus we have seen the constitution unigenitus, that child of Jesuitical revenge, procured by fraud and maintained by tyranny, erected into a rule of faith in France, where a few years before, to show the exercise of this power in a light as ridiculous as scandalous, not only propositions extracted from the works of Jansenius were condemned, but even they who did not understand the language in which the bishop of Ypres writ, like the nuns of Portroyal, were required to believe and affirm, that these very propositions were contained in his writings.

Such occasional abuses of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, which the pope and his inferior pontiffs have applied with little regard to natural religion, and even with more regard to their artificial theology than to revealed religion, have been frequent. But there is another, which has been constant in all the ages of the church, and by which the clergy has raised exorbitant contributions on the laity. When christianity appeared first in the world, the pro-

fessors of it composed a little, and in general a poor flock. They who had some substance helped to maintain those who had none; alms were gathered for the saints, and every church had a common purse. Like our quakers, they provided for their own poor; and, like our quakers too, the teachers and the taught made one body, one undivided society. The former as well as the latter lived on what they had of their own, or on the common purse, or on the bread they acquired by their industry: and, as ludicrous as it may seem, it may be said seriously, because it may be said truly, that if this order of things had been preserved among christians, we might behold at this day, with great edification, some of my lords the bishops working at their leisure hours (and they have many such from episcopal functions at least) in their trades, like St. Paul. But this order of things was changed early, and the distinction of clergy and laity established; after which the former enjoyed in their own right, or as trustees for the poor, all that had belonged to every church in common before. When the former came by several means to be considered as a separate society under the name of the church, they appropriated the wealth, which increased daily, as well as the name, to themselves; and when every church had a bishop, the superior robbed the inferior pastors, and appropriated to himself what belonged to them, to his church, and to the poor; all of whom he threw on the laity, to be maintained by them.

LXXIX.

LXXIX.

THAT I may not render the deduction too long for this place, I content myself to observe further, that as this order of men increased in outward dignity and riches, to neither of which they had any other claim than that which their own usurpations, and the bigot generosity of superstitious ages gave them, they increased in ambition and avarice. The doctrine of a future state was prostituted, to serve the purposes of both; and as soon as they had persuaded the laity, that the power of tying and untying, which was given by Christ to his disciples, invested the clergy with a power of determining in this world the condition of men in another, Heaven and Hell became inexhaustible sources of ecclesiastical dominion and wealth, and were applied to little else. The man, for instance, who left his estate to the church, and to pious uses, as they are called, completed all the immoralities of his life by defrauding his family at his death. But the priest, or monk, conveyed him to Heaven directly, and passports for that purpose, even of modern date, are said to have been found in the hands of the dead. The layman, who had a dispute with the church, stood exposed to the thunderbolt of excommunication, which he was prepared to believe did not only separate him from her communion here, but would deprive him of happiness hereafter; so

that he might be damned eternally for withholding a tithe pig.

It was left to the industry of the clergy, to improve these advantages in their several stations all over the christian world; and it must be owned, that they improved them to the utmost of their delegated power: for being delegated, as extensive as it was, it was circumscribed. But that from which it was delegated, and which resided in the seat of this empire, the papal power, in short, knew no bounds. Casuists have taught, that the pope may by the fulness of it determine rightfully against right*; as if he made things good and just by willing them; which is, I think, the prerogative of God, but which no man, except a casuist, will affirm to be that of his pretended vicar. The proposition will sound harshly to your ears, how catholick soever they may be. But if you consider the practice of your church, and the pretensions of your sovereign pontiff, you will be forced to confess, that they can be founded on nothing less than the supposition of such an exorbitant power as I have mentioned. There is no duty of natural, nor of revealed religion, nor of ecclesiastical institution, commonly much more respected than either, from the observation of which you may not be freed by dispensations, in the breach of which you may not be indulged, or for the breach of which you may not be still

* Ex plenitudine potestatis jure potest etiam contra jus decernere.

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more easily pardoned, at a market price; and this market price was formerly settled and published in a book of rates, that every good christian might know how much his favourite vice would cost him. A passage in the Gospel should have been altered on this occasion, and men should have been taught, that it is more easy for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a poor man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

A casuist more modest, and who thinks himself more subtile than the former, may allege perhaps, for it has been alleged, that the pope has virtually the keys of Heaven, since he has those of the treasure of the church, that treasure of merits which cannot be exhausted, the merits of Jesus Christ, which are infinite, and that render therefore the rest of the heap unnecessary, being contained in it; that he does not pretend to remit the debt, which the sinner owes to God on the balance of the account of good and evil actions, but that he pays by assigning out of this treasure as much merit as every sinner, who applies to him, wants to entitle him to salvation. So father Paul represents the doctrine . . . . " ricompensa il debito del peccatore con assegnare altretanto valor del tesoro*." Thus, it may be said, the pope decrees in all these cases according to a right which God has established, and not against right, by virtue of an assumed arbitrary unlimited power. But this whimsical

* Con. di Tren. L. i.

hypothesis, if it could be received, would answer the purpose for which it is invented by halves at most, for there is something behind much worse than the accusation already brought.

LXXX.

YOUR divines, as well as ours, affirm very truly of the preceptive parts, that though natural and revealed religion are distinct, yet the difference between them is not a difference of opposition; and that the latter, which enjoins positive duties not enjoined by the former, enjoins none that are inconsistent with it. But now the same men, who say this very truly when they speak of the precepts of the Gospel, say it very falsely when they speak of the religion, which their artificial theology has imposed for christianity, and which is no more like to it in some respects, than talapoism, bonzism, or lamaism are. Some of them hold morality in small account. They place all religion in the observation of such rites and ceremonies as their church has instituted, and in various acts of external devotion. They have been spoken of already. Their whole religion is a system of superstition, unworthy of God as the author, and unworthy to be believed and practised by rational creatures. There are those again, who hold morality in no account at all. Though God has given us reason to discern our moral obligations, and a freedom of will to practise

tise them, on which foundation alone it can be said either probably, or plausibly, that we are accountable creatures, and have been such in every age of the world; yet would there have been no such thing as moral virtue, nor as good works, if Christ had never come into the world, according to these doctors: for if moral righteteousness was at all times alike conformable to the will of God, in which conformity the very nature of it consists, it must have been at all times alike acceptable to him; at least it could never be unacceptable: but we are told, that it is unacceptable, unless it follow justification, unless it be produced by faith, by grace, by inspiration, and a whole process of mystery. Before Christ therefore it could not be conformable to the will of God, it could have no merit, nay, it could have no nature, there could be no such thing. This surely is fanaticism, and leads to enthusiasm. There are those again, and of those particularly I mean to speak in this place, who admit, that there is a religion of nature and of reason, that is, a primitive revelation which ought to be the foundation and criterion of every other: but in fact they deny what in words they admit; for under pretence of explaining and teaching a posterior revelation, they contradict the first. Their artificial theology does not only take in much of the superstition and fanaticism that have been mentioned, but imposes for doctrines and precepts of christianity, and enforces by the sanctions of eternal rewards and punish-

ments, such as would prove this revelation to be inconsistent and false, if they were really contained in it.

Nothing can be more repugnant to the spirit of christianity than violence, persecution and tyranny. Meekness and humility, forgiveness of injuries, and benevolence exalted into charity are the great characteristicks of this religion. They are so essential to it, that many have deemed it on this account a fit profession for some private sect, but a rule impracticable in the great political societies of mankind, and in the government of them *. That the clergy deemed it to be so very early, and has acted on this principle every since, is evident to those who know any thing of the ecclesiastical history. The first missionaries of the Gospel were sent forth to preach, to persuade, to convert, and baptise. If they did not succeed, they had no power to call down fire from Heaven; they were to shake off the dust of their feet, and to depart quietly. Their commission extended no further. If they did succeed, they esta-

* When christians became numerous the names of eminent bishops alone were recited out of the diptychs; but when they were few, all that died in the communion of the church were commemorated in this manner. The diptychs were registers originally of the subjects of Christ, who were to be hereafter citizens of the new Jerusalem typified by the church on Earth. Excommunication out of one, therefore, excluded out of the other. Hence the expression, that names were written in Heaven, and in the book of life, or that men's names were cast out.

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blished a church in the place, under orders and regulations of discipline, which seemed to be a necessary consequence of their original and solely authentick commission, though not expressly contained in it. Among these regulations, that of separating from the congregations and communion of christians, and of delivering over to Satan, unless they repented and satisfied the church, such as were guilty of notorious crimes, and such as presumed to teach in those congregations a contrary doctrine, was made by common consent. I say it was made, because it is plain it was executed, by common consent.

But this power became soon confined in the exercise to a few persons, and extended little by little, in the application of it, to a multitude of cases, neither intended nor thought of in the first institution. Persons were appointed by the collective body of christians in every church, that is by every church, to perform the duties which the apostles, that founded these churches, and the first pastors of them, however appointed, whether by the apostles or by the churches, performed. The persons thus appointed did not cease to be members of the same religious society, for the whole congregation of christians was properly such, any more than persons appointed to military or civil employments cease to be members of the same political society. But the solemn air with which these spiritual magistrates were admitted into their offices by ordination and consecration, if these ceremonies are to be distinguished

ed in honour of episcopacy, gave them a pretence to assume, and prepared others to believe, that there was, beside the human appointment, something divine in their institution; that they received the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands, and could transmit the same gift to others by the same ceremony. Thus they came to be esteemed not only a distinct order, as the priests, the soldiers, and the husbandmen were in the kingdom of Ægypt, but a distinct independent society too in many respects. This I mean. After Constantine had established christianity in the empire, the clergy were regarded as a superior order in the state whenever it was most advantageous for them to be reputed such; and as a distinct society in it whenever they thought fit, under the name of the church, to exercise powers, and to claim and procure to their order the enjoyments of immunities or privileges, which they could neither claim, nor have any pretence to enjoy under the first character, and as members of the same state. From hence arose a double absurdity. It was absurd, for it implied contradiction, that the same order of men should be, and should not be at once, a member of the same commonwealth. It was absurd, for it was repugnant to all the ideas of order, to suffer what is commonly called imperium in imperio, to suffer a second supreme legislative power to grow up, where a first was already established; and such a power especially as claimed a superior original, and an independent exercise: from which claims

it

it was easy to foresee what happened soon, that the two powers would clash, that a conflict of jurisdictions would arise, and that the eclesiastical might prevail over the civil.

The principal and most effectual weapon, which the clergy employed to make men submit to this tyranny, was the chimerical weapon of excommunication, forged in the chimerical fire of Hell. They employed it first in their spiritual wars, for the state of christianity has been a state of war from the beginning. In these they excommunicated and damned one another, till ignorance, superstition, and bigotry realizing chimeras, these spiritual wars became very carnal. The clergy railed, and the laity cut throats. Ecclesiastical quarrels disturbed the peace of the latter empire as much, and caused the effusion of as much blood, as the invasions of barbarous nations. But things grew worse as the church grew stronger, and the scene grew more disorderly, and more bloody too, after Charles the Great, when the western church was reduced into a monarchy, and the bishop of Rome became the monarch. In this elevation, with the whole body of the clergy more united, and better disciplined under him, his own ambition increased, and he animated and guided theirs. They had made themselves before this time a distinct society from the civil in every country where they had been admitted. His authority over them had been very great, if it had not been entire in every country. He abetted them in their usurpations, and they in return abetted his. But in this age the clergy secular and regular

gular composed not only a distinct ecclesiastical society in every particular state, they coalited into one political body, whereof the pope was the head all over the west. The contention for superiority over the civil powers was avowed; and while they defended themselves separately, or, which was worse, while they assisted the common enemy against one another, they were all subdued alike. Some of the greatest emperors were excommunicated, and in consequence insulted, oppressed, dethroned. The ecclesiastical order, and, at the instigation of this, all the other orders in their dominions revolted against them. They discovered as well as other princes and states, but they all discovered it too late, how dangerous it is to protect, enrich, fortify, or even to suffer any order of men, who, having a distinct interest, and owing a distinct allegiance, must of course become a distinct society in the state; and especially when this order has the means of turning the consciences, and enflaming the passions of men, by religion, against the state, and the legal government of it. Gregory the seventh carried these usurpations and this tyranny to the utmost height, by a more impudent, as well as a more successful prostitution of the doctrine of a future state, than any of his predecessors. From him his successors learned to distribute plenary indulgences with profusion, and to extend particular excommunications into general interdicts. By the first, they sold Heaven to the best bidders, and sent men in shoals to eternal happiness. By the second, they condemned

demned whole nations at once, deprived them of the means of salvation, and subjected them in one collective body to eternal misery. The first was a never failing source of wealth, the second of power. No instance can be produced in all these proceedings of any regard to true religion. Virtue and vice were out of the case. Even the opera operata of external devotion were enjoined for the sake of form alone. To be truly orthodox, and in a state of salvation, it was sufficient to submit blindly to the will of the church, and to procure the advancement of it against law, reason, and every moral obligation. To be heretical, and in a state of damnation, it was sufficient to refuse the submission, or to resist the usurpation. This abuse of the doctrine of a future state grew so common in a short time, that it was employed not only in the great struggles, which arose between the ecclesiastical and civil powers, but in every paltry affair wherein the popes had any personal or family concern; and indulgences and excommunications were let loose by this mitred tyrant to sate the ambition or avarice of a brother, a sister, a nephew, a niece, a whore, or a bastard.

LXXXI.

It is true, that this exorbitancy has been restrained within two centuries; and this restraint is due to the reformation. We shook off the tyrant and

and his tyranny at once. You have filed the fangs, and blunted the teeth of the beast. He may mumble and bruise, he cannot tear, and bite, and devour, as he did. But still the instances that have been cited are proper, and the reflections that have been made just. The instances are proper, because they are instances of the use that was made of this doctrine in the whole christian church during several centuries. The reflections are just, because, though the same use is not made of it now, even in your communion, that was made formerly, yet the same moral arguments are employed to maintain it; arguments, which cannot be reconciled, as it seems to my apprehension, to the belief of an all-perfect Being.

To demonstrate the existence of such a Being by appeals to the inward consciousness of their own existence, to the senses, and to the reason of men, is not a difficult task. But he who has succeeded in it, runs the risk of undoing what he has done, when he appeals at once to the senses and to the passions of men for the injustice of God's dispensations here; and to their reason alone prejudiced by the former, for the justice of dispensations hereafter, though the actuality of these must be always hypothetical, and the equity of them not so much as problematical. The divines of our communion run this risk even more than yours, because when they presume to reason, they have not the same reserve of church authority, which yours have, to stop the mouths of gainsayers. They put the truth, or rather the belief

lief of God's existence, in all they preach, and all they write, on the cast of a die. They may confirm their hearers and their readers in the doctrine they teach, but they may shake too the fundamental principle of all religion. Nay, they may drive into absolute atheism the man who is weak enough to be moved by one part of what they say, and not weak enough to be convinced by the other. No matter. They not only repeat the moral arguments, and the bold assertions that have been mentioned already, but they tell us sometimes, that the rules of evangelical perfection, such as self-denial, mortification, and others, are of so exalted a kind, that God gave the hope of future rewards and punishments to encourage us to the practice of them*. According to this doctrine then he is so cruel a Being, that he will make none happy hereafter, who have not made themselves miserable here. The man who will be saved must be initiated into the fanatical austerities of some religious order, to make his salvation sure, for aught I can see; and when he is so, he may have good reason perhaps to renew the question Diogenes asked, "num Patrœcioni furi, quod "initiatus fuerit, sors erit melior post mortem, "quam Epaminondæ?" They tell us sometimes, that the temporal promises made to a holy and virtuous life extend no further than to food and raiment, and to daily bread; and they demand, who would be contented with such a scanty pro-

* Atterbury.

vision,

vision, when he sees the greater prosperity of bad men, who dissolve in ease and luxury*? The proper answer to this question is to be made ad hominem, by asking another. Who would not be contented with this scanty provision here on the same terms, and why are not you, why do you, good man, repine at the greater prosperity of the wicked, when you know that eternal happiness is laid up in store for you, and eternal misery for them, who will want even a drop of water to cool their tongues in the next world, after dissolving in luxury here? They tell us sometimes, that without the hopes of another life virtue is but a dead and empty name†. Nay, there are those who have not scrupled to assert, that if there is not another world, all difference between good and bad is taken away in this world‡. To steal, to poison, to stab, to forswear, in short, to commit any action that brings either profit or pleasure, is reasonable: it is so far from being a crime, that it becomes a duty, in as much as it promotes the happiness, that is, the chief end of the man who commits it. The two first of these doctrines are the quintessence of theological absurdity, the two last are abhorrent from all the principles of natural religion, and none of them come up to the purpose for which they are advanced. If there is no other life, virtue is but a dead and empty name, they say; and yet the in-

* Sherlock, not the righteous bishop, but his father.

† Tillotson. ‡ Wilkins, cum aliis.

finite

finite wisdom of the Creator has constituted the state of mankind, and the order of things in this world so, that human happiness rises and falls, is acquired or lost, in proportion to the practice or neglect of virtue. Crimes are reasonable, vice becomes a duty, on the same supposition that there is no future state, they say; and yet vice is as opposite to virtue in it's effects as in it's nature, according to the same constitution and the same order of things. Neither the immortality of the soul, nor future rewards and punishments, can be demonstrated on principles of reason, notwithstanding all the metaphysical, theological, and even geometrical attempts that have been made, with the same evidence as all our moral obligations may be. The religion of nature, therefore, teaches the latter independently of the former. There may be rewards and punishments reserved to another life; but whether there are, or are not, the religion of nature teaches, that morality is our greatest interest, because it tends to the greatest happiness of our whole kind in this life, and our greatest duty, because it is made such by the will of that Supreme Being who created us, and the system to which we belong. It is false, therefore, and impious to assert, as these divines do, that if there is no other life, there are no moral obligations; or as Paschal does, that if there were no other life, the directions of reason for our conduct in this world would not be such as they are.

But to have done with such absurdities for

good and all. I cannot close these Minutes better than by observing how wide a difference there is between natural and artificial religion. It has been observed*, that the difference between the things of nature and those of art appears to our great surprise, since microscopes have been in use; and this surprise increases in proportion as they are improved. The things of nature appear to be adapted to useful purposes, wherever these purposes can be discerned; they are elegant, they are finished, and the mind is ravished into admiration. The things of art are adapted often to purposes that are hurtful; and to whatever purposes they are adapted, when we see them such as they really are, they appear to be clumsy, bungling, coarse, and imperfect instruments. A just and easy application of this remark might be made to things intellectual, and especially to those of a theological kind, and to the reasonings of men about them. Thus, to take an instance of the highest and most important object of human speculation, let us reflect once more on the notions that philosophers and divines have entertained and propagated concerning the Deity: for these are the fountains of all religions; and as they are pure, or impure, so must the streams that flow from them be. Right reason neither stops too short, nor goes too far in attempts to frame such notions as these. She frames them in that light, which comes reflected from the

* By Bishop Wilkins in his Treatise on Nat. Rel.

works

works of God, and in which alone we may say that he shows himself to man. Imagination, on the contrary, knows no bounds, but proceeds from one hypothetical reasoning to another, till she has framed all those notions of the Deity, which the prepossessions, the habits, the professions, and the interests of men, who give her this loose, require. The consequence has been, and it could be no other, that natural religion represents an all-perfect Being to our adoration and to our love; and the precept, "thou shalt love "the Lord thy God with all thy heart," will be effectual in this system. In the other, in that of artificial theology, I apprehend that it cannot be so; for I have learned from doctor Barrow*, that in the frame of the human soul "the perceptive "part doth always go before the appetitive; that "affection follows opinion; and that no object "otherwise moves our desires than as repre-"sented by reason or by fancy good unto us. This," he says, "is our natural way of acting; and ac-"cording to it, that we may in due measure love "God, he must appear proportionably amiable "and desirable to us. He must appear to be "the Fountain of all good, the sole Author of all "the happiness we can hope for." Can any man now presume to say, that the God of Moses, or the God of Paul, is this amiable Being? The God of the first is partial, unjust, and cruel; delights in blood, commands assassinations, massa-

* Serm. xxii.

cres, and even exterminations of people. The God of the second elects some of his creatures to salvation, and predestinates others to damnation, even in the womb of their mothers. This precept of the Gospel, therefore, cannot refer to such a God as either of these: and indeed, if there was not a Being infinitely more perfect than these, there would be no God at all, nor any true religion in the world. But there is most assuredly such a Being; and he who proposes any system of religion, wherein this all-perfect Being is not to be found, may say that he is no atheist, but cannot say with truth that he is a theist.

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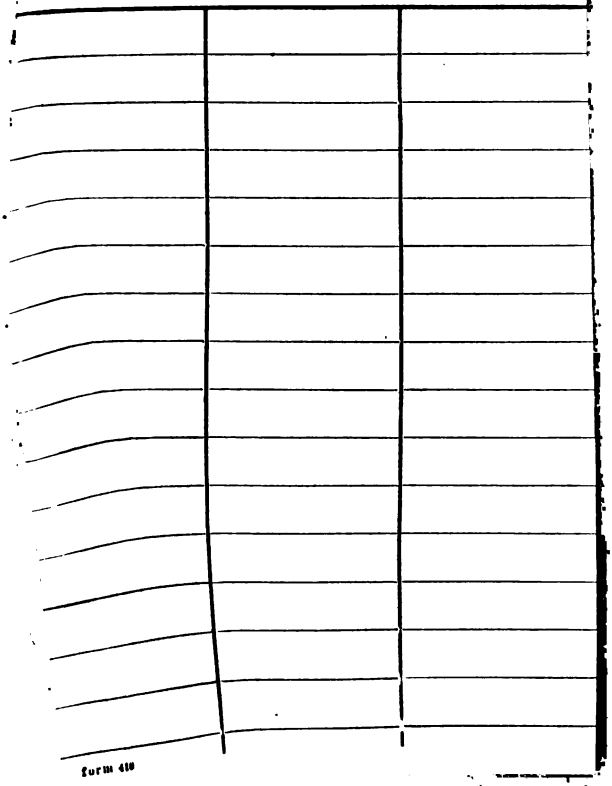

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